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CHELSEA FLOWER SHOW

Our preview of the best gardens, plants and trends

How to create beautiful pot displays

Design ideas for a long, narrow garden

Vita Sackville-West

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editor's letter

Looking through the designs and planting plans for Chelsea, it's apparent that this year's show promises to be as exciting and inspiring as ever. With the cream of the horticultural world vying for the visitors' attention, there's always an incredible amount to take in. So, to make sure you don't miss key highlights, we've distilled down what we anticipate will be the hottest show gardens and plants to look out for this year. It's fascinating to discover which trends are emerging, so don't forget to listen to our Chelsea podcast in which myself and my colleague Sorrel interview regulars to the show to find out what they've spotted (visit gardensillustrated.com and click through to podcasts). This issue we also take a look at four very different gardens. Although they vary enormously in terms of scale and style, they're unified by their owners' love of plants. Designer Tom de Witte's garden in the Netherlands is a clever example of creating interest along the length of a long, narrow garden by the use of plants and materials to create different 'rooms'. Long Barn, the garden where newly weds Vita Sackville-West and Harold Nicolson honed their garden skills, displays similar techniques – albeit on a grander scale. Long Barn, which continues to be nurtured by its current owners, is a fine example of how the best gardens pay homage to the past while moving steadily forward through adventurous planting and rigorous horticultural practices – in fact just like the best displays at Chelsea this year. I hope you enjoy the issue.

Juliet

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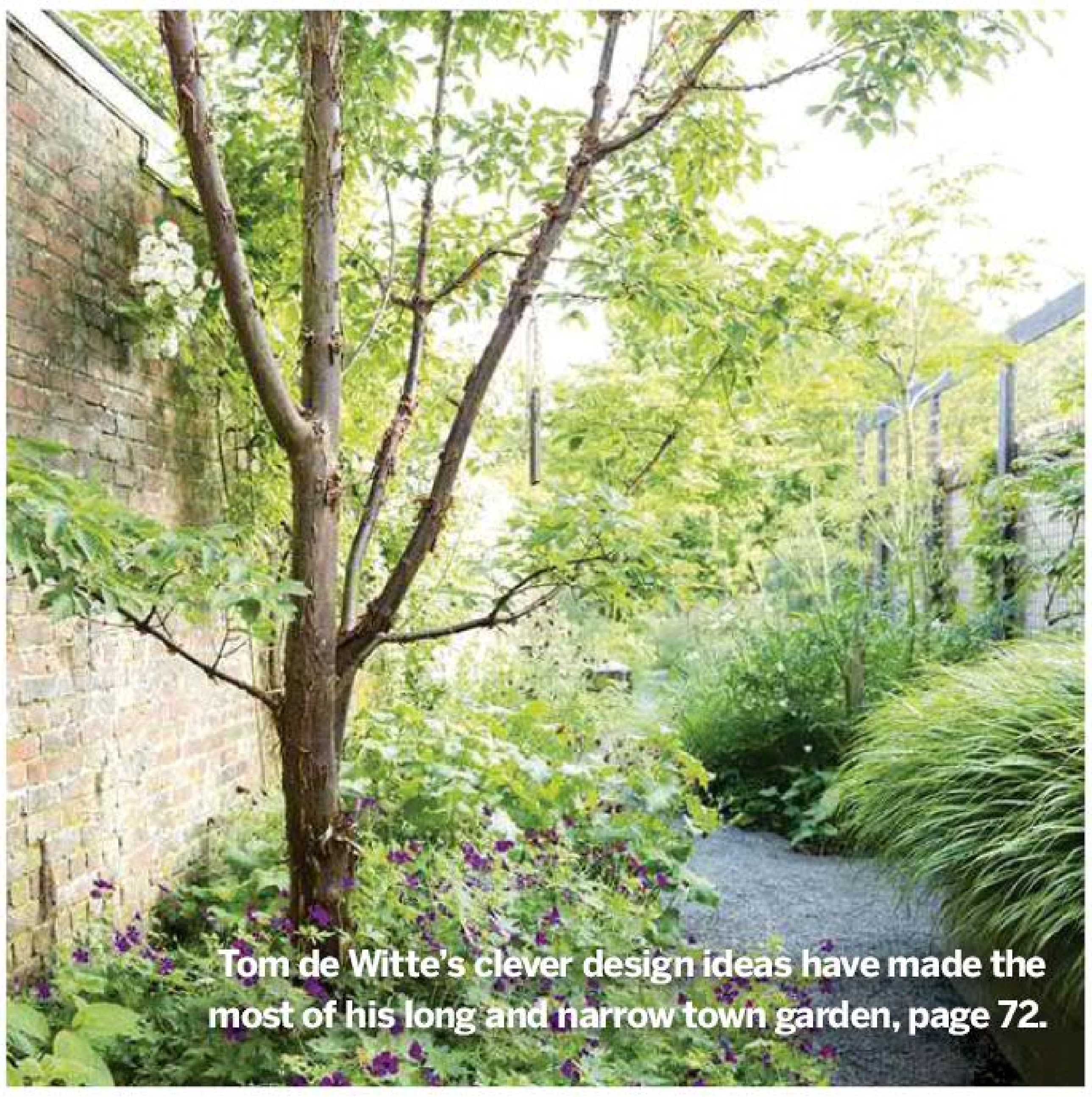
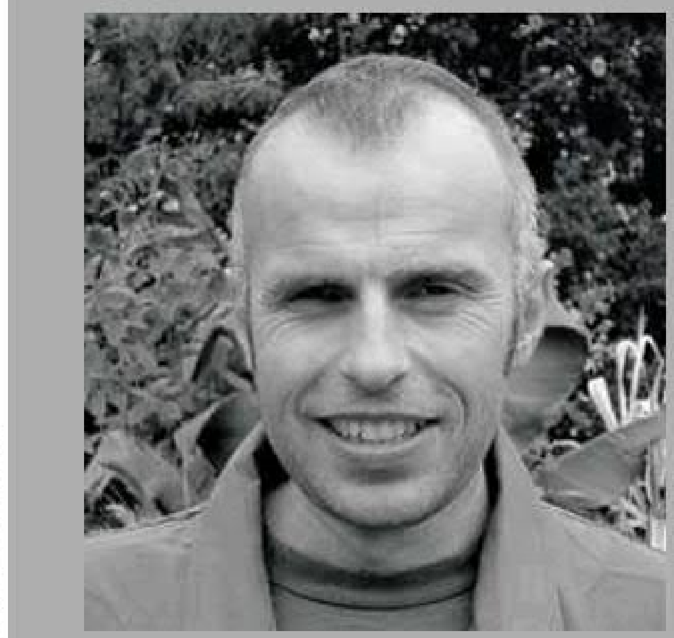


Tom de Witte's clever design ideas have made the most of his long and narrow town garden, page 72.

***Iris* 'Out of the Dark' promises to one of the stand out plants at this year's Chelsea Flower Show, page 54.**

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS



FERGUS GARRETT
Plantsman and head gardener at Great Dixter in East Sussex.

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MAAYKE DE RIDDER, CLIVE NICHOLS

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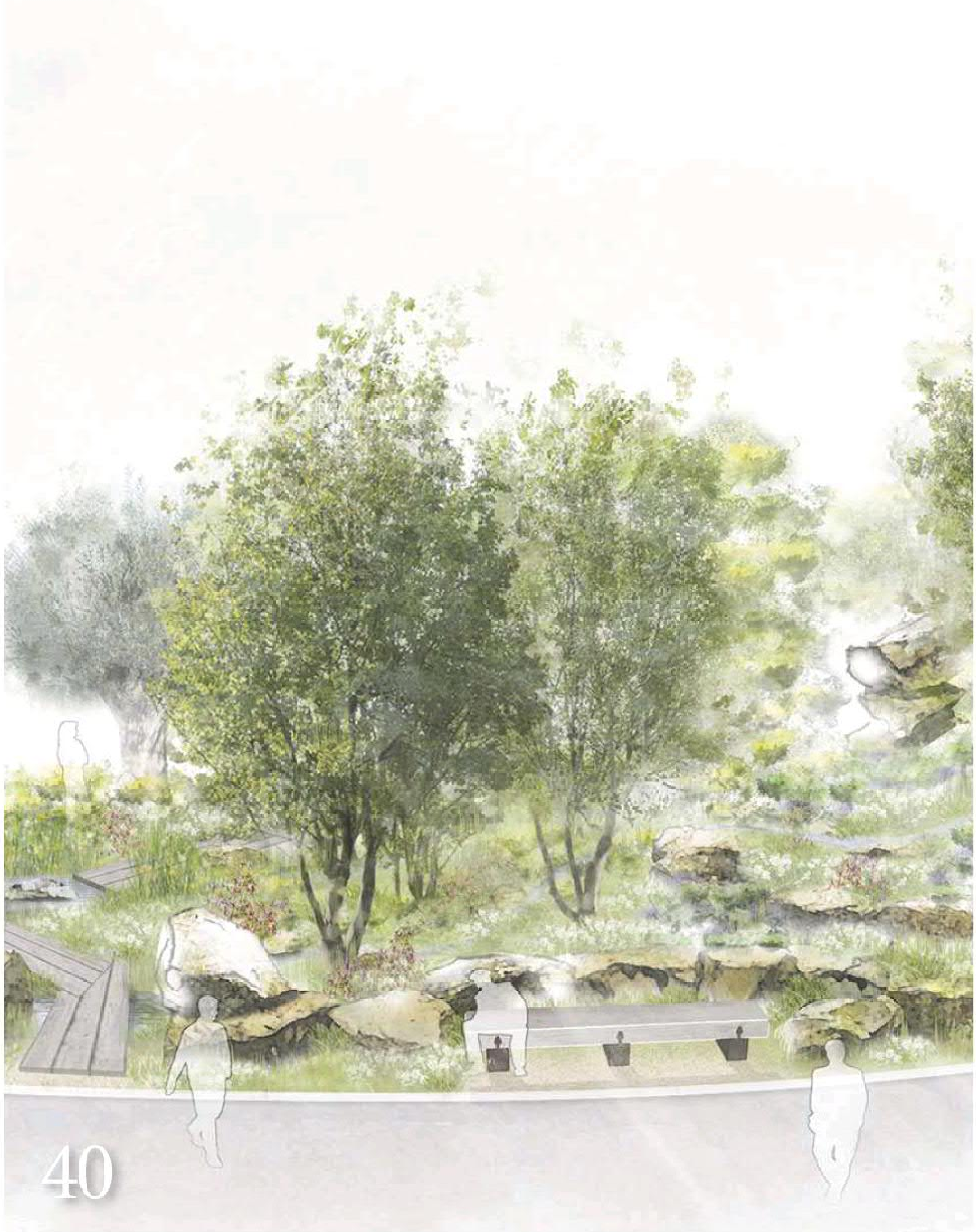

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Long Barn in Kent
Photography by
Claire Takacs

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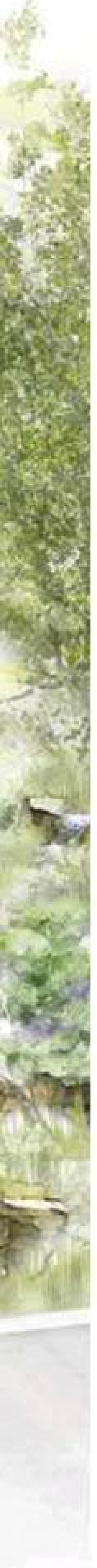

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successfully integrated their garden with the surrounding landscape of the Somerset Levels

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- Save money when you subscribe to the digital edition – see page 36
- Book your early bird tickets for the **Australian Landscape Conference**, 18-22 September 2015 – see page 120

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contributors

JODIE JONES

London-based Jodie is the former deputy editor of *Gardens Illustrated*. She's just moved house for the first time in 17 years, and is now having to confront her prejudice of variegated shrubs and yellow flowers. On page 86 she meets Frank Ronan.

"My nine-hour round trip to Frank's corner of Worcestershire was worth it to see his garden. He also happens to be a superb cook."

HANNAH McVICAR

With a passion for drawing and plants, illustrator and printmaker Hannah has been one of our busiest contributors over the past five years. This month she's illustrated our seed packet, two garden plans and designed the tea towel for our new shop range, launched on page 118.

"Illustrating the GI seed packets is one of my favourite commissions. I love the selection the team choose each year."

DIANNA JAZWINSKI

Based on the Dorset coast, Dianna is a photographer specialising in plants, gardens and florals and is widely published in national and international magazines and books. On page 78 she visits the Heucheraholics nursery to photograph our plant profile.

"Heucherellas are now one of my firm favourites for the wonderful colours and textures of both flowers and foliage."

CELIA HART

Celia has taken on the monthly illustration for Frank Ronan's column – see page 130 this issue. An illustrator and printmaker, she finds inspiration for her lino and woodcuts in the garden surrounding her studio in southwest Suffolk and on walks in the East Anglian countryside.

"Frank's words set me a monthly challenge – I happily settle down with a stack of reference books, a sketchbook and a mug of tea."

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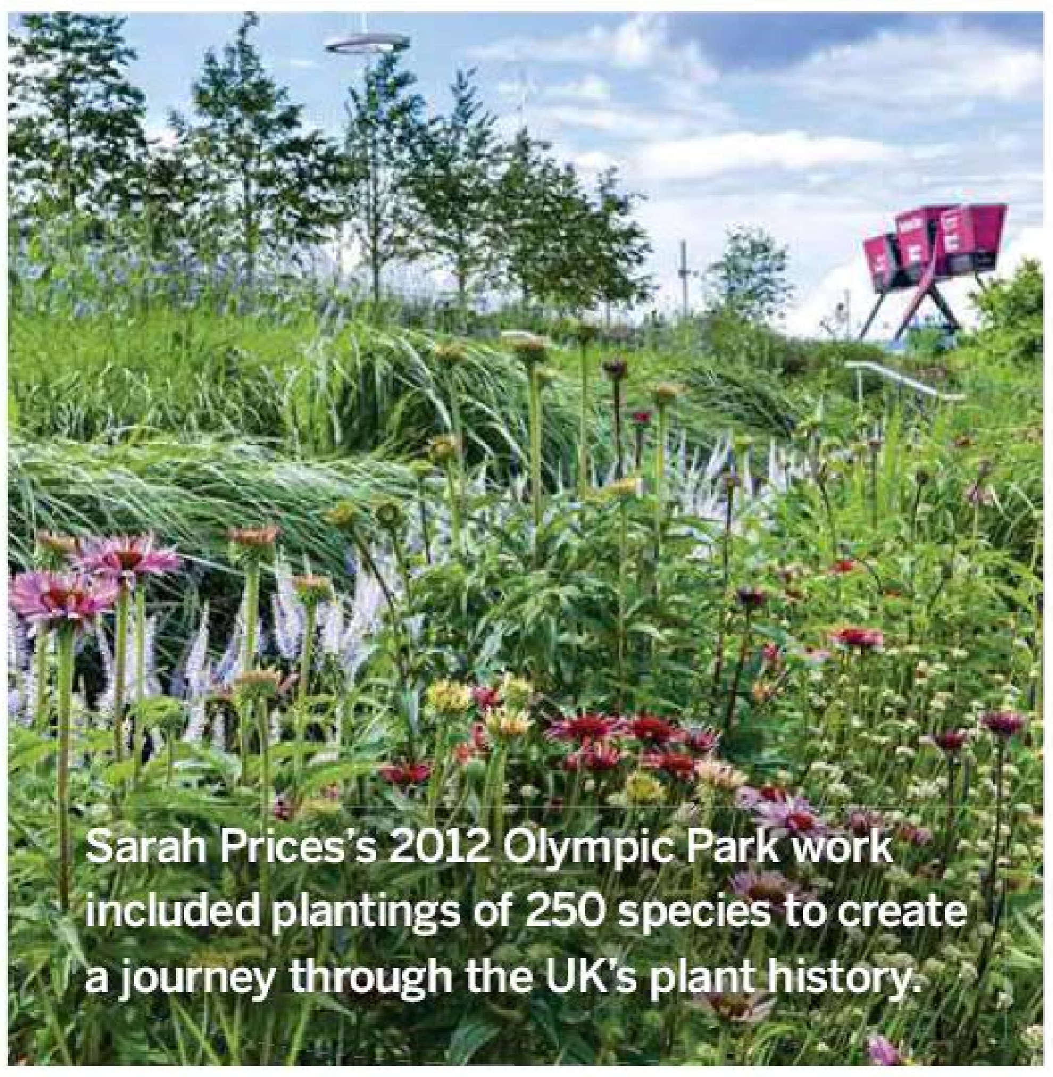
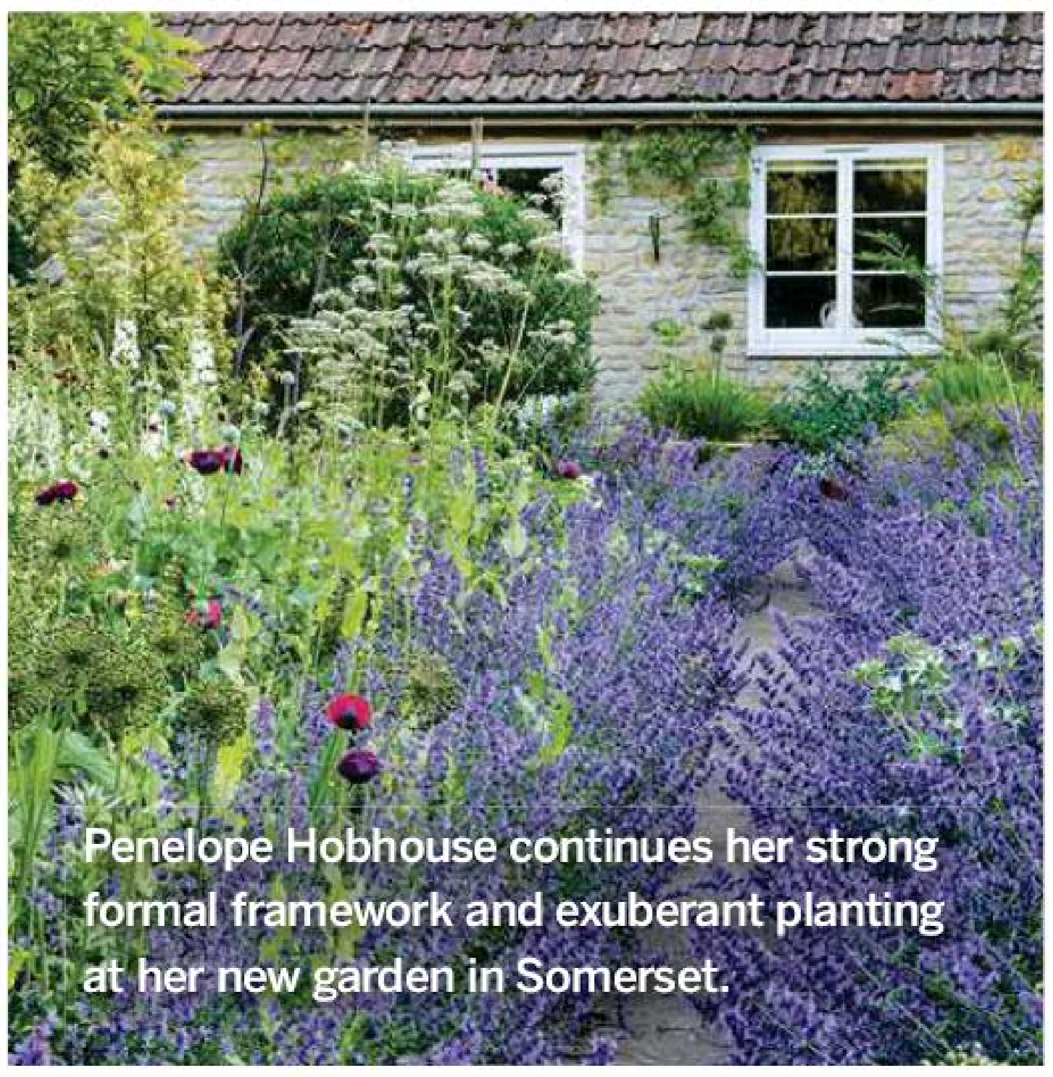
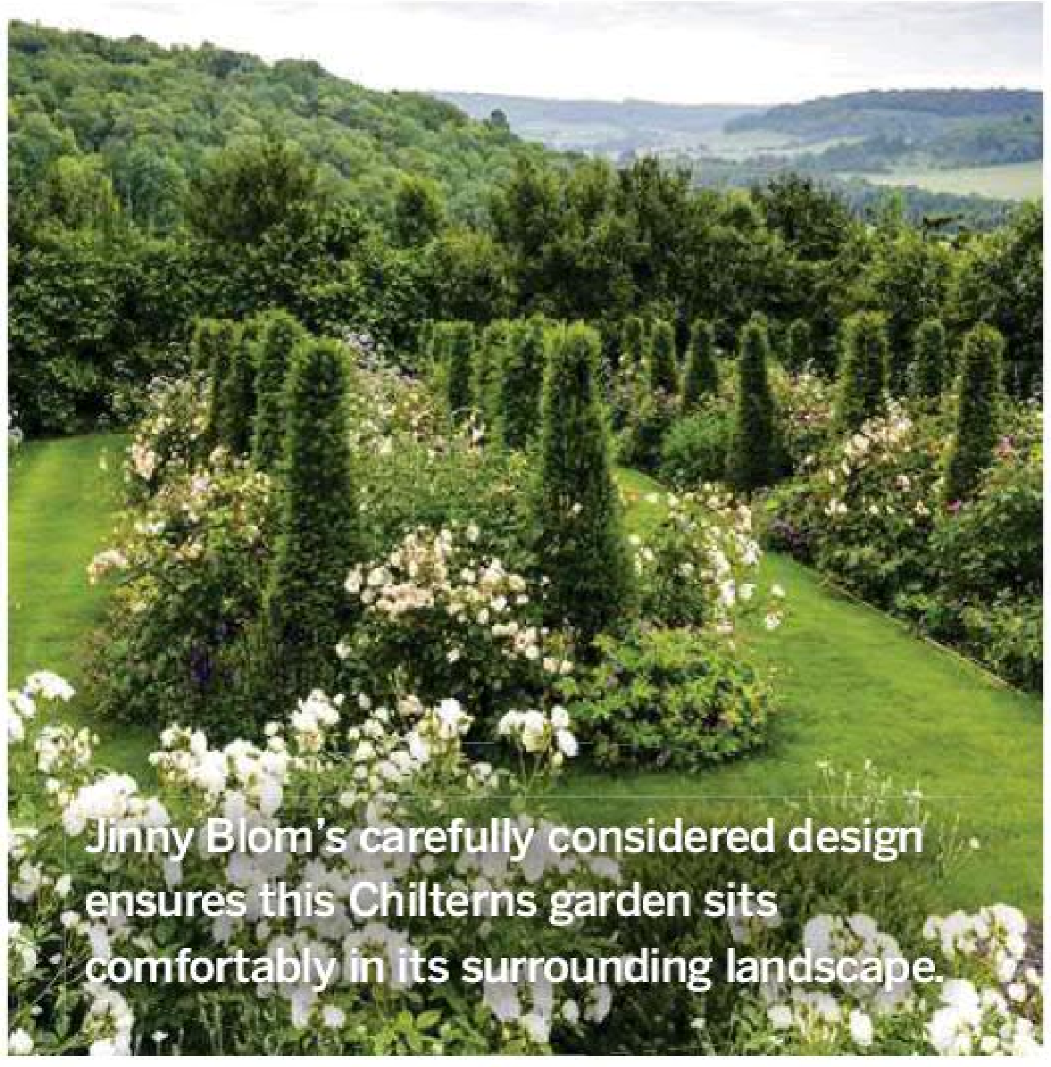

Sarah Prices's 2012 Olympic Park work included plantings of 250 species to create a journey through the UK's plant history.


Penelope Hobhouse continues her strong formal framework and exuberant planting at her new garden in Somerset.


Jinny Blom's carefully considered design ensures this Chilterns garden sits comfortably in its surrounding landscape.

Tuesday 19 May 2015

Gardens Illustrated Talk

Join us at the Royal Geographical Society in London with three generations of women garden designers

We are delighted to once again be hosting the *Gardens Illustrated* Talk. Our speakers – Penelope Hobhouse, Jinny Blom and Sarah Price – represent three generations of women designers and will discuss their work, as well as consider the role of women in garden design past, present and future. Book now for standard or premium tickets. All tickets are allocated seating with premium ticket holders seated in the front section of the lecture theatre.

Penelope Hobhouse is a garden writer, garden designer, garden historian, lecturer and gardener. For 14 years she was in charge of the National Trust garden at Tintinhull House in Somerset. Now in her eighties, she has recently moved house and is relishing the opportunity of developing a new garden.

Jinny Blom set up a landscape and garden design practice in 2000, having previously followed a career as a psychologist. Her gardens are defined by beautiful craftsmanship and intelligent planting. She is currently working on projects in the UK, Italy, the USA and Kenya.

Sarah Price trained in fine art before becoming a garden designer. She achieved worldwide recognition for her work at the Olympic Park in 2012. With a love of wild and natural environments, she believes gardens should inspire a deeper connection with the natural world.

Talk details

- **Date** Tuesday 19 May 2015.
- **Venue** Royal Geographical Society, 1 Kensington Gore, London SW7 2AR.

PROGRAMME

- **6pm** Doors open – cash bar available.
- **7pm** Talk begins.
- **8.30pm** Q&A session concludes.
- **9pm** Doors close.

TICKETS

- **Subscribers***
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  You'll need your special subscriber event code when booking. This is printed on the bag in which your magazine is posted.
- **Non-subscribers**
  Standard £25; Premium £35.
  All tickets are allocated seating.
  Premium tickets are located in the front section of the lecture theatre.

Gardens Illustrated reserves the right to replace any of the speakers with other speakers of equal stature in the unlikely event that any of them are unable to attend. Tickets must be booked in advance. Please let us know when booking of any special access requirements. Tickets are non-refundable. Driving to the talk is not advised. Nearest London Underground station is South Kensington. Cash bar.
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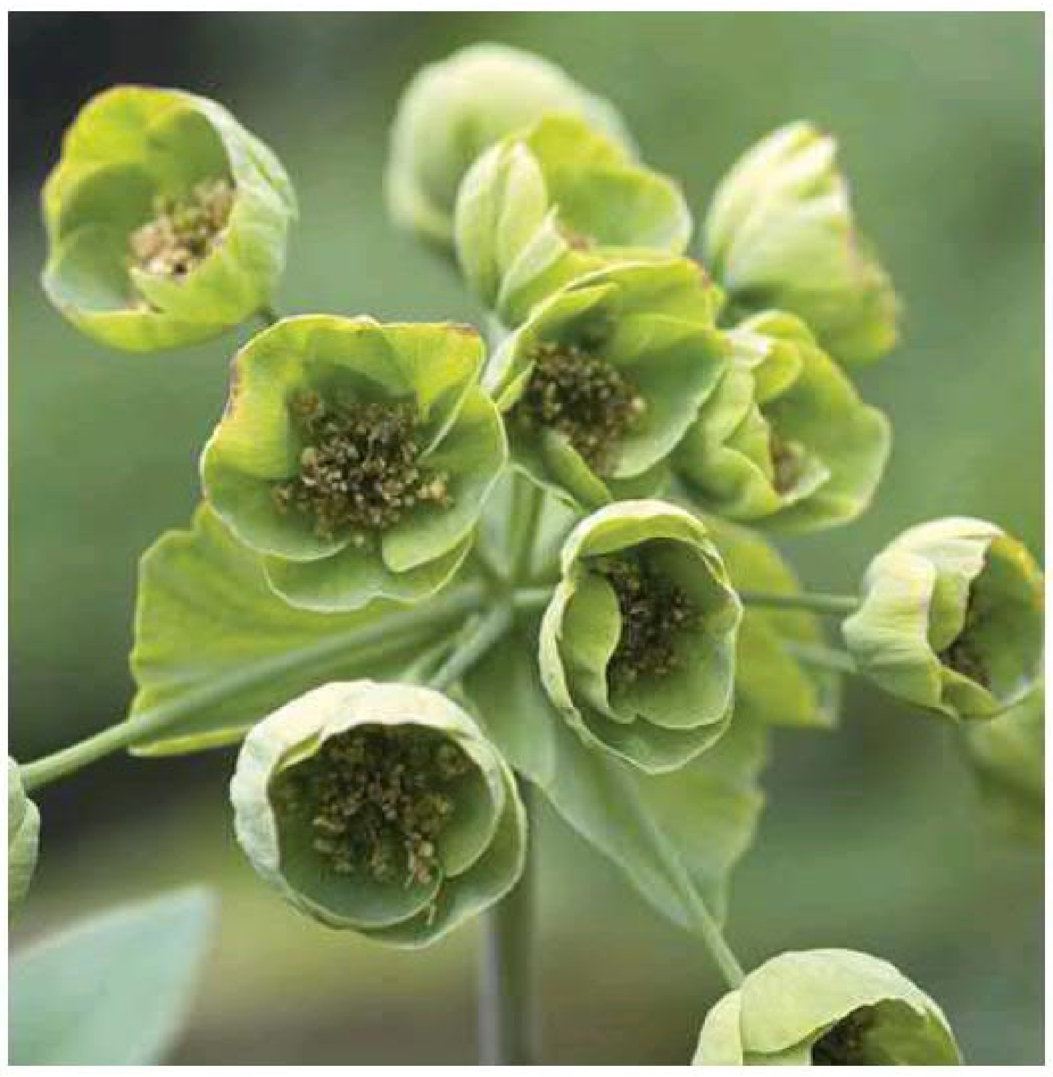


Monday 1 June 2015

The allure of umbellifers

Spend a day at Great Dixter with nurserywoman Marina Christopher and head gardener Fergus Garrett looking at the variety and enduring appeal of umbellifers

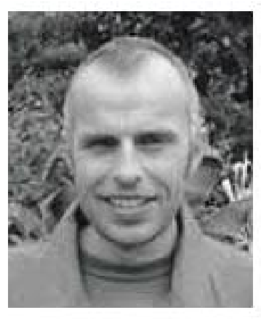
With the gardens at Great Dixter as a backdrop, Marina Christopher and Fergus Garrett will spend the day looking at the variety of umbellifers available to gardeners and explain how they can be used to best effect in the garden. These beautiful plants with their showy clusters of flowers are much loved by gardeners.

In the morning, Marina and Fergus will demonstrate the botanical characteristics of the many different species of umbellifer found in the flower and vegetable garden, their various commercial uses and their importance to the ecology of the garden as excellent attractors of beneficial insects and pollinators.

In the afternoon you'll be taken on a guided tour of the gardens with Marina and Fergus, who will explain how they use umbellifers in the garden and ways in which they can be combined with other plants to create striking displays.

Your day includes lunch and refreshments and a 10 per cent discount on plants at the Great Dixter nursery (valid on the day only).

Marina Christopher trained in botany before becoming a nurserywoman 30 years ago. She set up her own nursery, Phoenix Perennial Plants, in Hampshire in 2003, which is renowned for its exceptional plant choices and for its focus on particular species that are beneficial to insects.



Head gardener **Fergus Garrett** is an expert plantsman who gardened alongside Great Dixter's late owner Christopher Lloyd until his death in 2006. Fergus continues to garden in the spirit of innovation for which Christo was renowned and ensures that Great Dixter remains one of England's finest gardens.

Event details

- **Date** Monday 1 June 2015.
- **Venue** Great Dixter, near Hastings, East Sussex TN31 6PH.

PROGRAMME

- **10am** Arrival and coffee.
- **10.30am** Talk from Marina Christopher and Fergus Garrett on umbellifers and their importance in the garden.
- **1pm** Lunch in the Great Hall.
- **1.45pm** Marina and Fergus lead walks around the gardens.
- **4pm** Tea in the nursery, plus the opportunity to buy plants.

TICKETS

- Tickets cost £100, and must be booked in advance.

Tickets and directions will be sent out prior to the event. Places are limited so booking is essential. Please advise us when booking of any dietary requirements or accessibility queries. For more details about the day itself call Great Dixter on 01797 254048 or go to greatdixter.co.uk
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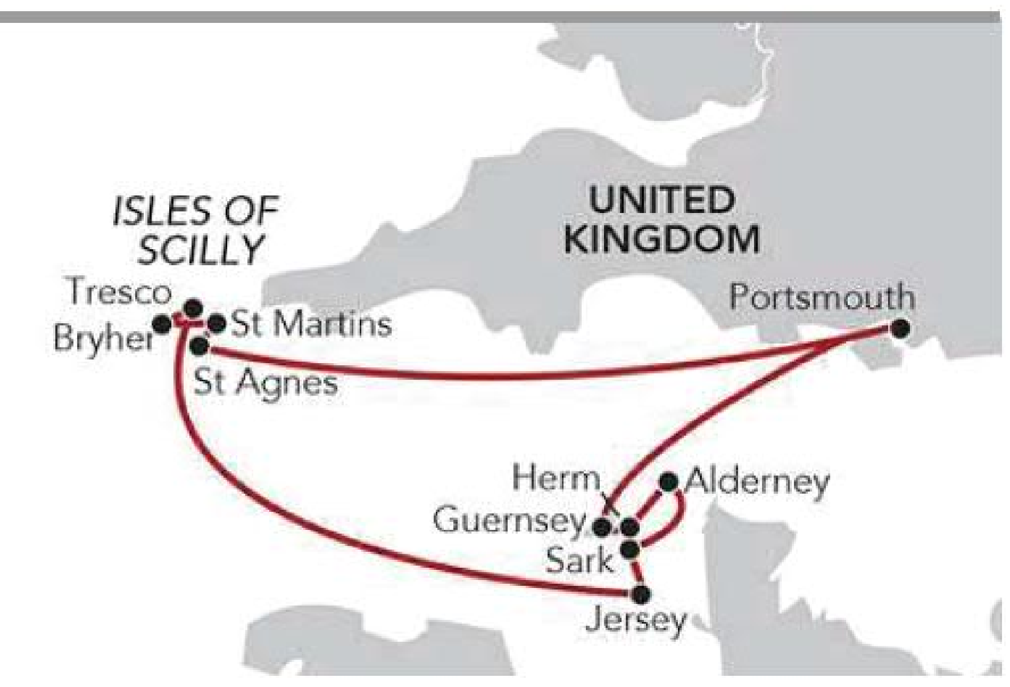

Sometimes, a few days away in a totally different environment is just what the doctor ordered, particularly if it does not involve flights. Join the charming MS Serenissima in Portsmouth and visit some of the most idyllic islands including Sark, Alderney, Tresco, St Martins and St Agnes with their crystal clear waters and fine white sandy beaches that would not disgrace a Caribbean island. These islands are so close yet are not easily visited and whilst the sailing distances are relatively short, there is much to see and experience. From the Channel Islands which combine beautiful scenery, gallic charm and reminders of their occupation during World War II along the coastlines to the remote Isles of Scilly where nature abounds and we can take in the sights at a relaxing pace.

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The Itinerary

Day 1 - Portsmouth. Embark this afternoon.

Day 2 - Guernsey & Herm, Channel Islands. Arrive this morning on Guernsey, the 'Island of Flowers'. There will be the option of a walking tour of St Peter Port including a visit to Castle Cornet, a 12th century battlement which guards the entrance to St Peter Port Harbour. Alternatively enjoy a panoramic drive which will see the beautiful coastline and beaches and also visit the Little Chapel, built in 1914 as a miniature version of the famous basilica at Lourdes and covered in fragments of shattered china. This afternoon we are on Herm, the smallest inhabited Channel Island and at just one and a half miles long and half a mile wide, perfect for exploring on foot.

Day 3 - Alderney & Sark. Sail over breakfast to timeless Alderney. Visit the island's only town, St Anne, which has all the old-world charm of a Normandy village with tiny squares and pastel shaded cottages and shops. Enjoy a free morning either walking along the pretty quiet lanes, join a short walk to see the German fortifications or a longer walk with our naturalists heading to the cliffs to see the abundant birdlife. Over lunch we sail to Sark where we will use our Zodiacs to land on this peaceful traffic free island. Horse drawn carriages take us along the narrow lanes alive with the songs of chaffinches, skylarks and mistle thrush as we see the narrow isthmus which joins Little Sark and Big Sark and the enchanting gardens at La Seigneurie.

Day 4 - Jersey. From our anchorage in Jersey we will enjoy a morning drive to the east coast of the island viewing the magnificent landscapes before arriving at Mont Orgeuil, the impressive fortification that has witnessed island life through the middle ages, French Wars and German Occupation. Continue to Samares Manor Gardens. Built in 1920 by Sir James Knott these gardens include special areas for culinary and cosmetic plants as well as a "physic" garden of traditional medicinal plants along with a rose and lavender garden. Return to the ship for lunch and enjoy an afternoon to explore St Helier independently.

Day 5 - Tresco, Isles of Scilly. Enjoy a relaxing morning at sea as we cruise over to the lovely Isles of Scilly arriving at lunchtime. We will spend the afternoon on traffic free Tresco, walking its idyllic lanes from the beach to the famous subtropical Abbey Gardens. Defying the Atlantic weather, this miracle of a garden is home to more than 20,000 species of plants from over 80 countries. Enjoy time to wander at your own pace along the paths.

Day 6 - Bryher & St Martins. This morning local tenders will land us on Bryher the smallest of the inhabited Isles of Scilly. Our naturalists will lead a number of guided walks along the tracks that cross the island amongst hedgerows and fields bursting with wildflowers. Return to the ship for lunch as we sail the short distance to the northernmost island of the group, St Martins. Enjoy an afternoon in this small island community of just 120 residents with time to explore independently or maybe join one of our birders on a guided walk, climb one of the viewpoints for vistas over the islands and the offshore seal colonies or swim from one of the stunning beaches.

Day 7 - St Agnes. Our final call will be at St Agnes, the most south westerly community in the UK. Surrounded by rocks and reefs, this delightful tiny island is a birdwatcher's paradise and offers marvellous coastal walks. Enjoy walks in the old town, see the lighthouse or maybe visit the local museum. Meanwhile the small island of Gugh lies across a narrow sandbar and here we find a single stone monolith called the 'Old Man of Gugh' which dates back to the Bronze Age.

Day 8 - Portsmouth. Disembark this morning.

Prices and Inclusions

Special offer prices per person based on double occupancy range from £2430 for a category 1 cabin to £3795 for an Owner's Suite. Single cabins from £2430.

Price Includes: Seven nights aboard the MS Serenissima on a full board basis with house wine and beer and soft drinks with lunch and dinner, Noble Caledonia onboard team, shore excursions, parking in Portsmouth, all gratuities, port taxes.

NB. Ports and itinerary subject to change. All special offers are subject to availability. Our current booking conditions apply to all reservations. Travel insurance is not included in the price.

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Alternatively view or request online at **www.noble-caledonia.co.uk**

NOBLE CALEDONIA

Monday 20 July 2015

Garden tour at Highgrove

We are delighted to offer readers of *Gardens Illustrated* the chance to attend a special tour of the glorious gardens at Highgrove, the private home of TRH The Prince of Wales and The Duchess of Cornwall

Over 30 years in the making, Highgrove is one of the most creatively inspired gardens anywhere in the world. A series of interlinked areas, each with their own character and purpose, weave around the house, reflecting the gardening ideals and organic principles of HRH The Prince of Wales. (Look out for our feature on the gardens next month.)

On this special tour as part of a small group you will be able to appreciate the subtle colours and planting in the organic garden as the late afternoon light softens, and the sound of birdsong in the woods and trees. Afterwards you will have the opportunity to visit the Highgrove Estate Shop and you will be served Highgrove Champagne and delicious canapés as the sun sets over the magical Highgrove Gardens.

Your visit includes:
- Tea, coffee and biscuits on arrival at 5pm
- A guided tour of the garden lasting approximately two hours
- Champagne and canapés served on your return from the garden tour
- 10% discount on any purchases in the Highgrove Estate Shop
- A *Gardens Illustrated* goody bag
- A Highgrove guide book in a gift box, sent in advance with your ticket

TO BOOK
ONLINE **highgroveshop.com/gioffer**
OR CALL **0333 222 4555**†

† Lines are open Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm. Calls are charged at local rates from UK landlines. Calls from mobiles may cost considerably more.

Event details

- **Date** Monday 20 July 2015.
- **Venue** Highgrove Garden, Tetbury, Gloucestershire.

PROGRAMME

- **5pm** Arrival, refreshments on the terrace.
- **5.30pm** Tour of the garden.
- **7.30pm** Highgrove Champagne and canapés served, plus the opportunity to browse the Highgrove Shop.
- **9pm** Approximate finish.

TICKETS

- Tickets cost £95 per person. Places are limited so we recommend booking early to avoid disappointment.

All profits from Highgrove Garden Tours, products and events are donated to HRH The Prince of Wales's Charitable Foundation.

Tickets are non-refundable and cannot be exchanged. We reserve the right to change any element of an event due to circumstances beyond its reasonable control. By attending the event you agree to be photographed and waive all rights, including moral rights, in any photography. Full details will be sent with a confirmation letter.

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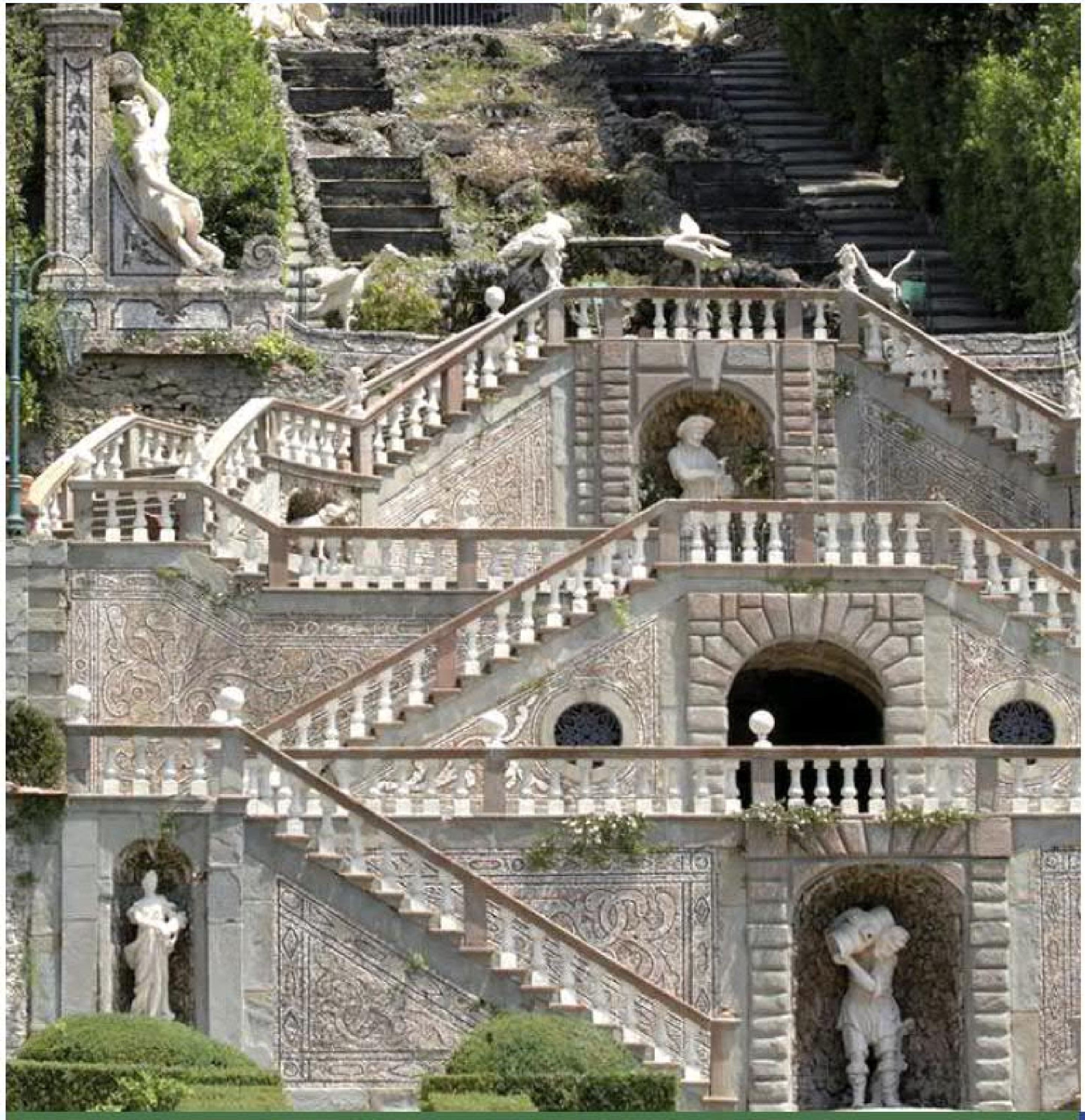
TUSCANY
Visits to: Poggio Torselli, Villa Geggiano, Villa Grabau, Villa Oliva, Parco di Villa Reale
2015: 31 May, 5 July, 6 Sep

LAKES COMO AND MAGGIORE
Visits to: Villa Babbianello, Villa Carlotta, Villa Monastero, Isola Bella, Isola Madre
2015: 12 May, 16 Jun, 7 Jul, 8 Sep

AMALFI COAST, CAPRI AND ISCHIA
Visits to: La Mortella, Caserta, Villa Rufolo
2015: 30 April, 4 Jun, 17 Sep

THE VENETO AND VERONA
Visits to: Villa Pisani, Villa Emo, Villa Rizzardi
2015: 3 Jun



- Travel by luxury small coach
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- British Airways flights included

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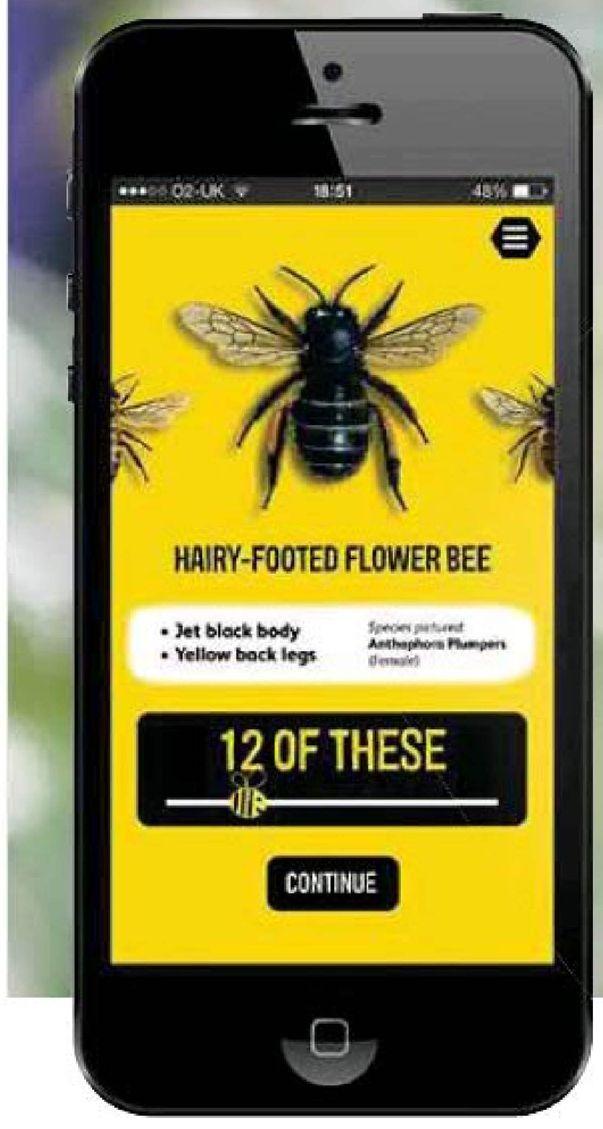
Dig in

What's happening, where to go, what's in flower and what to buy this month

NEWS COMPILED BY **SORREL EVERTON**

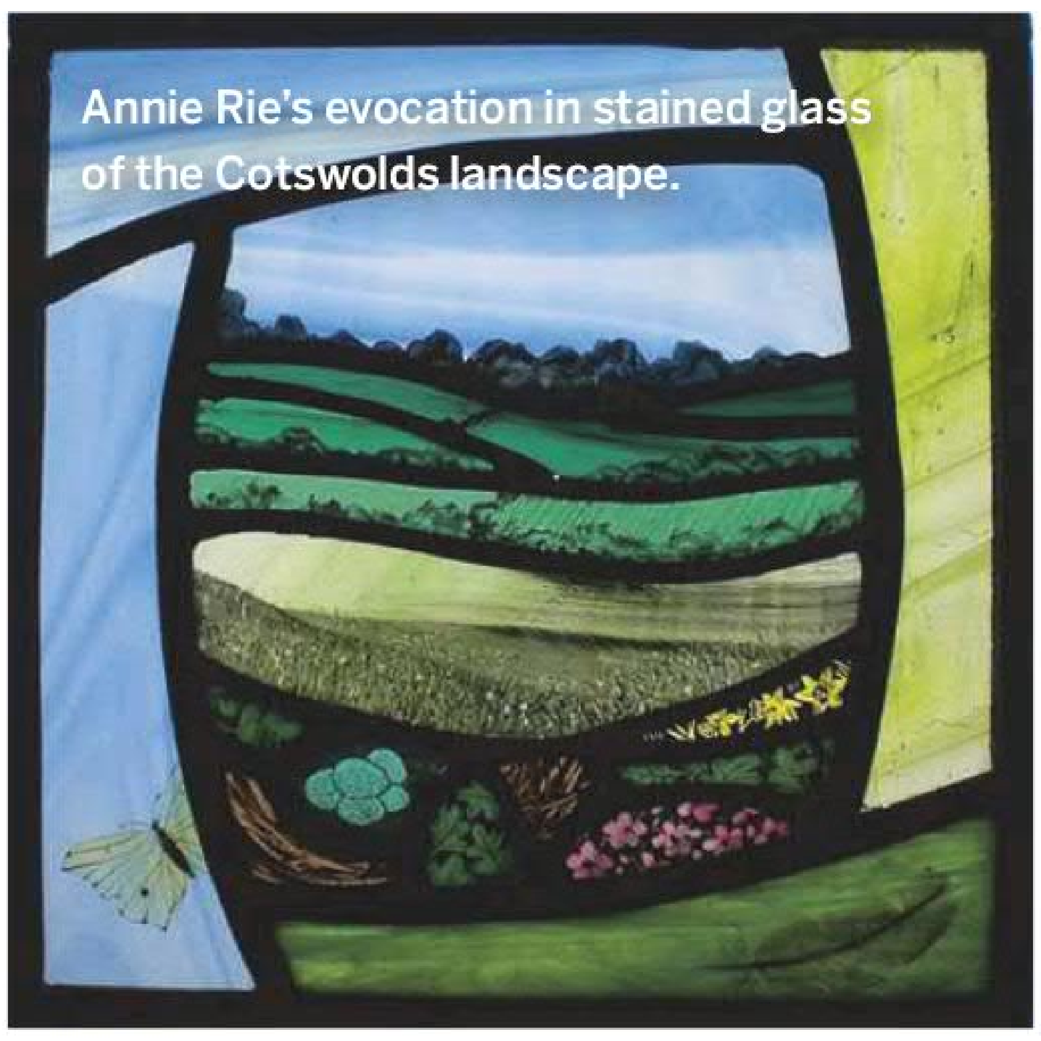
GAP PHOTOS / ELKE BORKOWSKI


O2-UK
18:51
48%
HAIRY-FOOTED FLOWER BEE
• Jet black body
• Yellow back legs
Species pictured
Anthophora Plumpers
(female)
12 OF THESE
CONTINUE

OUT AND ABOUT

Great British Bee Count

More than 20 species of bee have become extinct and a quarter of the remaining 267 species are under threat from loss of habitat and disease. You can help inform scientists and policy makers about what can be done to help by taking part in The Great British Bee Count. Throughout May, record the number and type of bees that you see – whether it is in the garden, at your allotment, park or school garden. Your findings can be uploaded via the free app or the website with the results helping to build a picture of where and what bees are thriving and where populations are struggling. To find out more about the Great British Bee Count 2015 and how to take part go to **greatbritishbeecount.co.uk**



Annie Rie's evocation in stained glass of the Cotswolds landscape.

SUPPORT ARTISANS

Tetbury Craft Fair

Browse, buy or commission work from 20 professional designer-makers at the Tetbury Craft Fair, which this year focuses on designs 'Inspired by Nature'. All the exhibitors are members of the Gloucestershire Guild of Craftsmen with work including pieces of furniture, textiles, jewellery, stained glass, pottery, book binding and leather work. 27-31 May, 10am-6pm. Tetbury Market House, Tetbury, Gloucestershire. **guildcrafts.org.uk**

GARDEN TO VISIT

Regency legacy

The final part of a £3.6m restoration programme of the Swiss Garden at Shuttleworth in Bedfordshire was completed this spring with the replanting of ferns to the restored Grotto and Fernery. This rare example of a Regency garden created some 200 years ago has had its 13 listed buildings and garden structures saved and lost vistas reinstated. The garden is hosting a plant fair on 10 May. The Swiss Garden, The Shuttleworth Collection, Nr Biggleswade, Bedfordshire SG18 9EP. Tel 01767 627933, shuttleworth.org/the-swiss-garden

Crocus are among the nurseries offering Chelsea Flower Show plant sales – your chance to pick up some exciting designer plant choices.

BUY DESIGNER PLANTS

Take Chelsea home

Even if you haven't made it to the Chelsea Flower Show, but are curious to pick up on the show's top planting trends, then make a note of these nursery events. Whitewater Plant Centre, Hampshire, the wholesale arm of which, Hortus Loci, is supplying a number of designer show gardens, has special Chelsea plants displays in the nursery from 19 May (**whitewaterplantcentre.co.uk**). Online retailer Crocus, also one of Chelsea's top suppliers, has open days at its nursery in Surrey on 30 May and 6 June selling stock remaining from the plants grown for the show gardens (**crocus.co.uk/openday**). And award-winning nursery Thorncroft Clematis in Norfolk will be selling off plants left over from its Chelsea stand in the Great Pavilion on 30 May (**thorncroftclematis.co.uk**).

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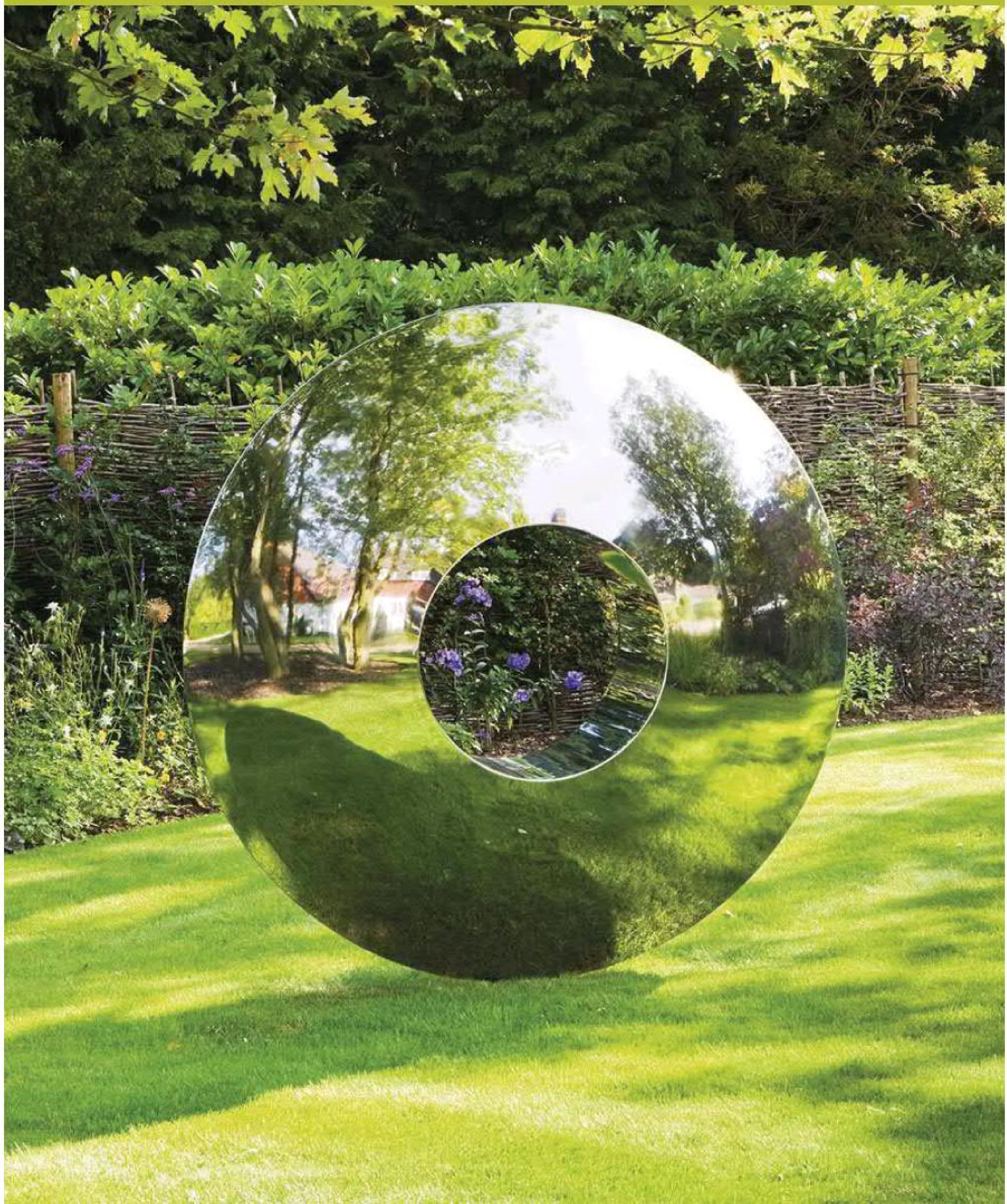


Clumber's head gardener Chris Margrave admires the crop.

OUT AND ABOUT

Rhubarb rhubarb

Could you name five different rhubarb cultivars? How about 130? That's how many Clumber Park boasts in its National Collection, which includes 'Buck's Early Red', the first culinary rhubarb selected from a wild rhubarb species. Find out more at its Rhubarb Weekend, 9-10 May, with tastings, advice and the chance to buy. Clumber Park, Worksop, Nottinghamshire S80 3AZ. Tel 01909 544917, **nationaltrust.org.uk**

GARDEN SHOW

GROW London ticket offer

For a contemporary take on British gardening visit GROW London garden fair, 19-21 June, Hampstead Heath. You'll find stylish garden products and plants, plus there are talks from experts. We have ten pairs of tickets to give away to the Garden Party Preview on the evening of Thursday 18 June (worth £50) to the first ten readers who email hello@growlondon.com quoting 'Gardens Illustrated' in the subject line. Or, for half price tickets for the Friday, Saturday or Sunday, go to **growlondon.com** and use the code GIHP15 when booking.

ORLA KIELY GARDEN JOURNAL

This gardening journal with designer Orla Kiely's bright graphic patterns has pages for images, pockets for storing seeds or magazine clippings, graph paper pages, stickers and pages for logging planting and sowing records.

orla kiely
gardening
journal

Available from book suppliers, £20 (published by Conran Octopus).

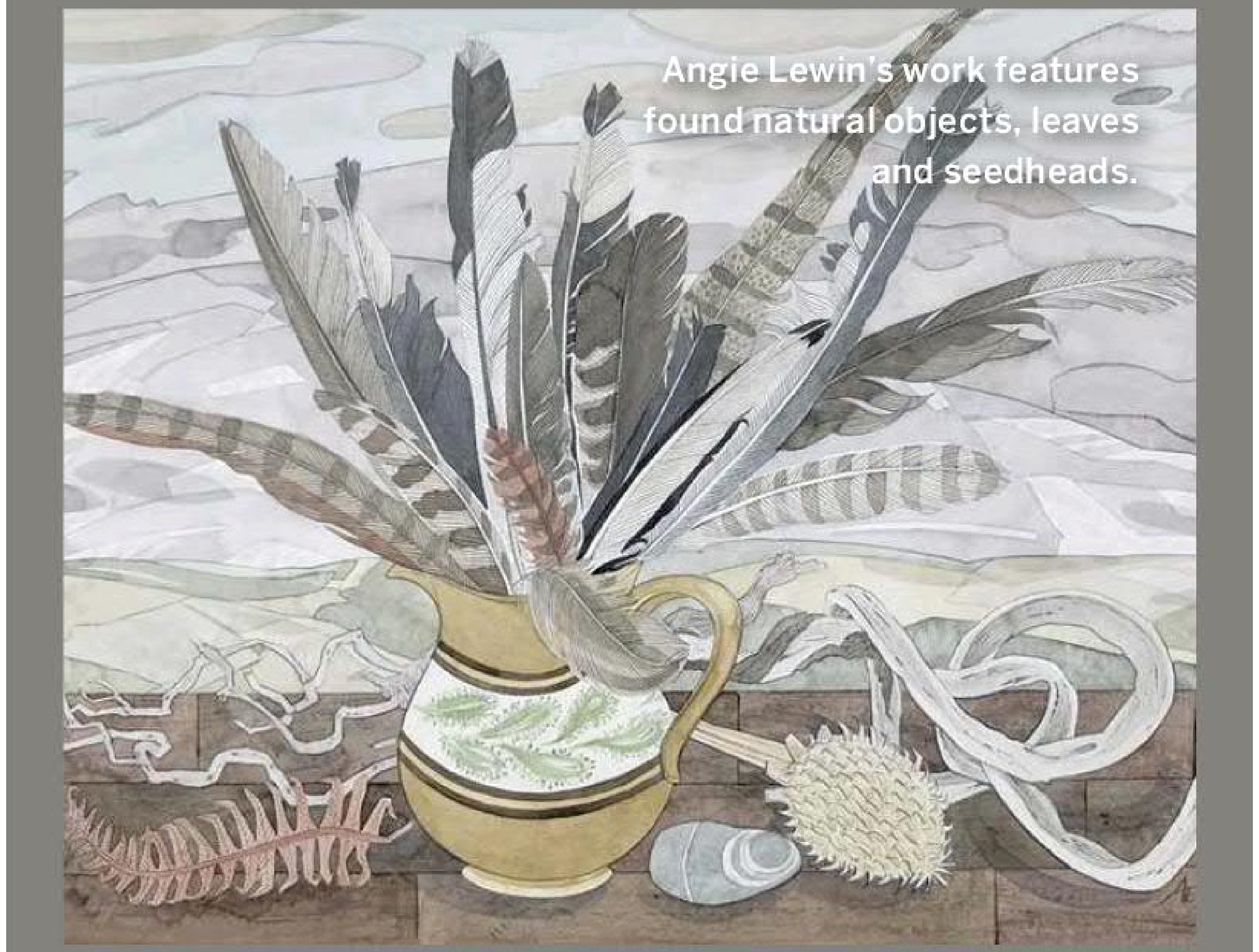
Diary

- **Toby Buckland Garden Festival Powderham**

Leading local nurseries, gardening craft, talks and workshops. 1-2 May, 10am-5pm, £7.50 (£6 in advance). Powderham Castle, Kenton, Exeter, Devon EX6 8JQ. **tobygardenfest.co.uk**

- **Angie Lewin watercolours**

Exhibition of new series of watercolours from artist Angie Lewin. 1-30 May (closed Sundays). The Scottish Gallery, 16 Dundas St, Edinburgh EH3 6HZ. Tel 0131 558 1200, **scottish-gallery.co.uk**



Angie Lewin's work features found natural objects, leaves and seedheads.

- **Botanical Illustration – Spring Greens**

Botanical illustrator Valerie Price guides you in the observation of colour, shape and texture of leaves. 8 May, £75. Ardington School of Crafts, School Road, Ardington, Oxfordshire OX12 8PN. Tel 01235 833433, **ardingtonschoolofcrafts.com**

- **Cambridge University Botanic Garden Festival of Plants**

Annual festival bringing together horticulture and science. Horticulturists, plant experts and scientists all on hand for talks, tours and plant sales. 16 May, 10am-5pm. Free. University Botanic Garden, 1 Brookside, Cambridge CB2 1JE. Tel 01223 336265, **botanic.cam.ac.uk**

- **The special flowers of Oxford Meadows**

The 2015 Biodiversity Lecture and the first in the Oxford Botanic garden Summer Lectures series. This talk celebrates the flora of Oxford's ancient floodplain hay meadow. 22 May, 6.30pm. £8. Daubeny Lecture Theatre, The University of Oxford Botanic Garden, Rose Lane, Oxford OX1 4AZ. Tel 01865 286690, **botanic-garden.ox.ac.uk/whatson**

- **Lost Art of Nature Printing**

Printermaker Pia Östlund helps you create nature prints using a technique developed by 15th century physicians. 26 May, 10.30am-2.30pm (for ages ten-plus). £9.90 (child £6.60). Chelsea Physic Garden, 66 Royal Hospital Road, London SW3 4HS. Tel 020 7352 5646, **chelseaphysicgarden.co.uk**

- **RHS London Rose Show** New for 2015

Rose displays from specialist growers and florists with lots of rose growing advice. 29-30 May, 10am-5pm. £8 (£5 in advance). Royal Horticultural Halls, London SW1P 2QW. **rhs.org.uk**

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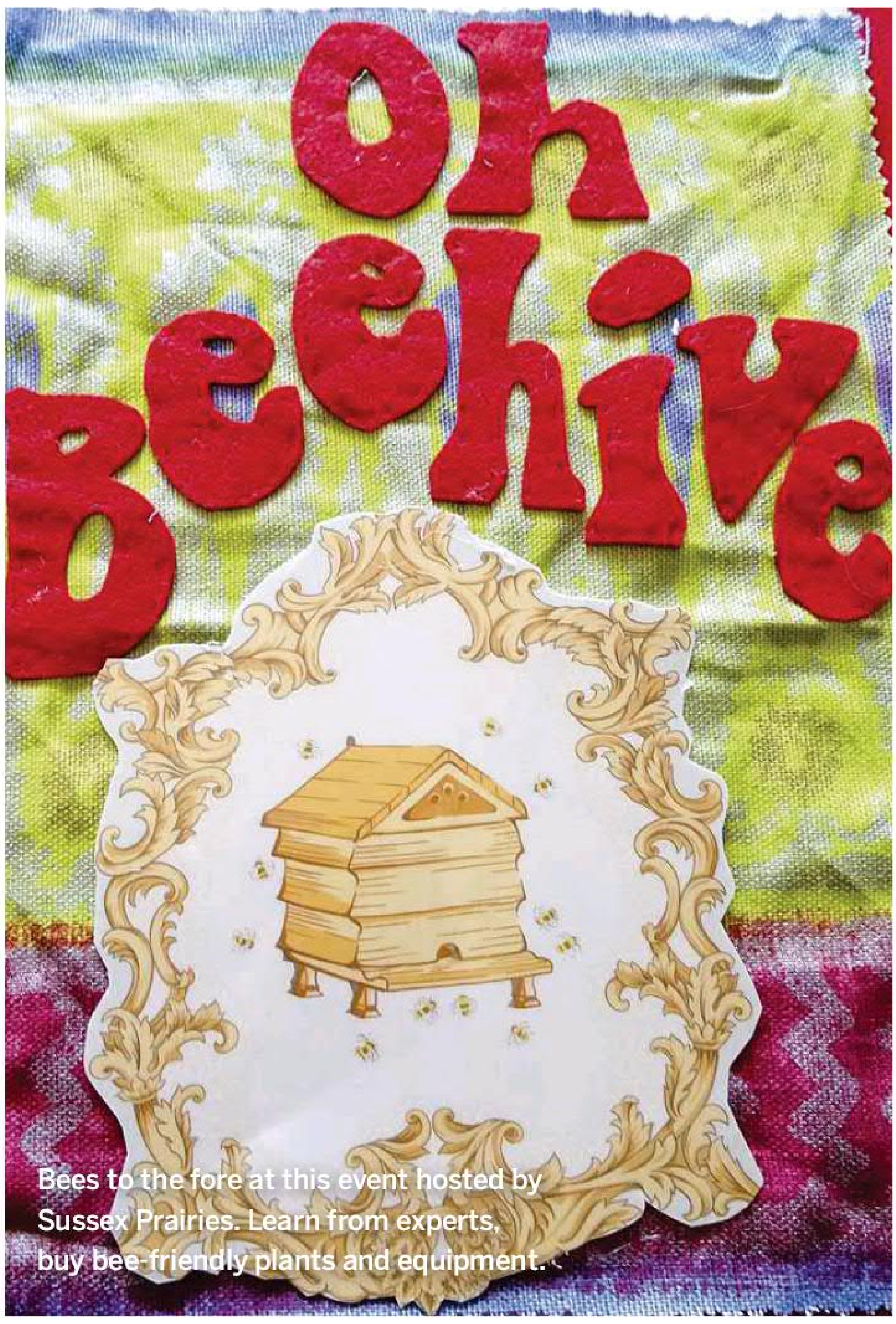
Decorate your boat, kayak or punt in a floral theme and join the Floral Flotilla, this year at Henley-on-Thames.



Bees to the fore at this event hosted by Sussex Prairies. Learn from experts, buy bee-friendly plants and equipment.

Chelsea Fringe 16 May – 7 June

The Chelsea Fringe brings to the fore an alternative approach to gardening with input from a wide range of ages and communities. We highlight a selection of garden-focused installations and pop-up events taking place in London – and beyond

Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park
Various events taking place, including summer shrub and tree identification, bat walks, wild food walk and a practical pharmacy session on preparing medicinal herbs.
• Tower Hamlets, London E3. Dates and details for all these activities are on the Fringe website and www.fothcp.org. Booking required.

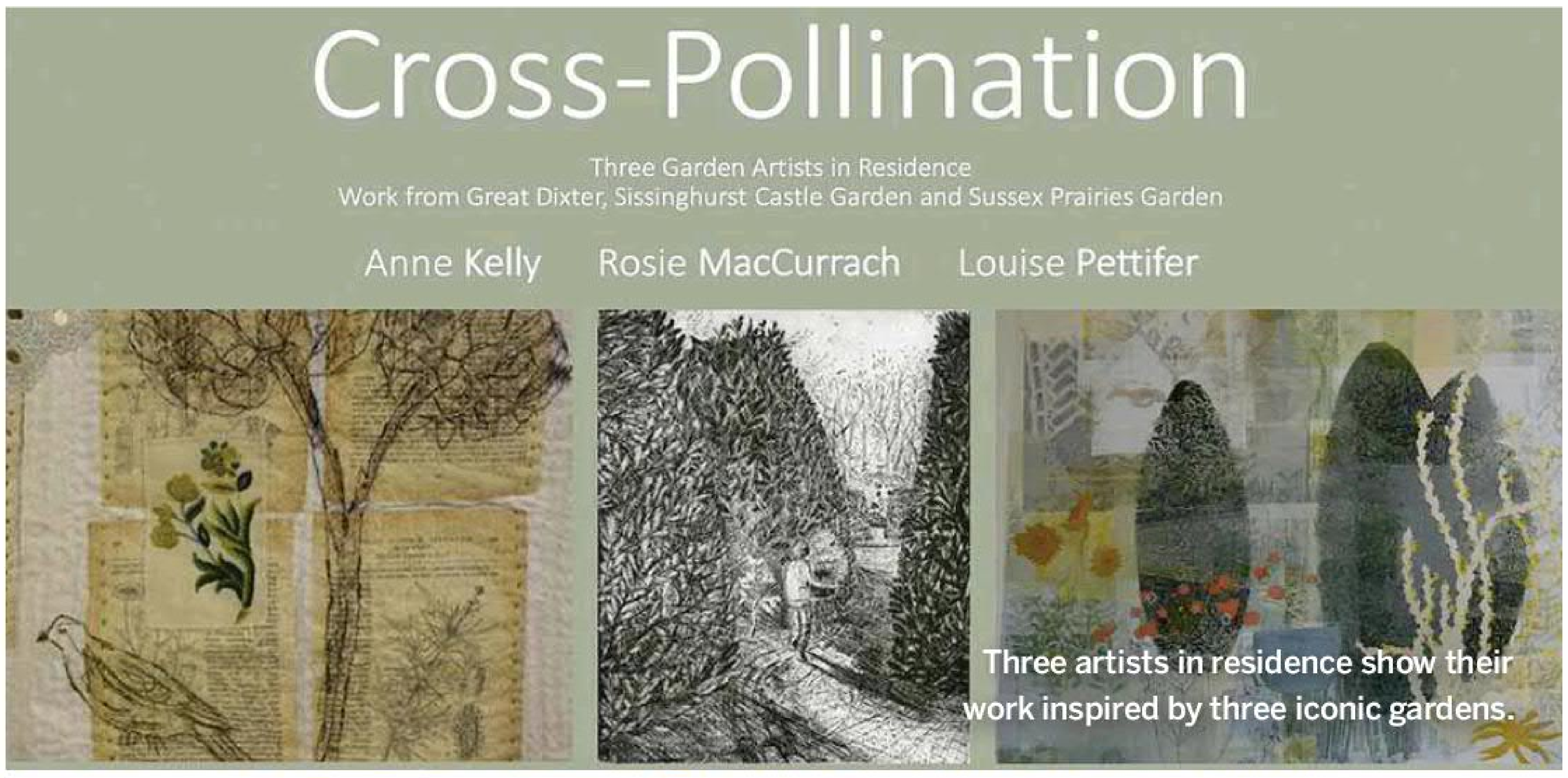
Hugo Bugg Garden Parties
Hugo's gold-winning Chelsea garden from 2013 has a new home in Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens. Celebrate its arrival at a launch party on 15 May with food, drink, music and Hugo on hand to talk through his design. Further garden parties then take place on each Friday during the Fringe: 22, 29 May and 5 June, 12-3pm.
• Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens, London SE11.

Pop-up Art Gardens
Held at the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne and Cranbourne in Australia, a series of 'art gardens' created by students explore the botanic gardens' vision that 'life is sustained and enriched by plants'. 16 May – 7 June.
• Dunlop Plaza, Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne and Promenade Plaza, Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne, rbg.vic.gov.au

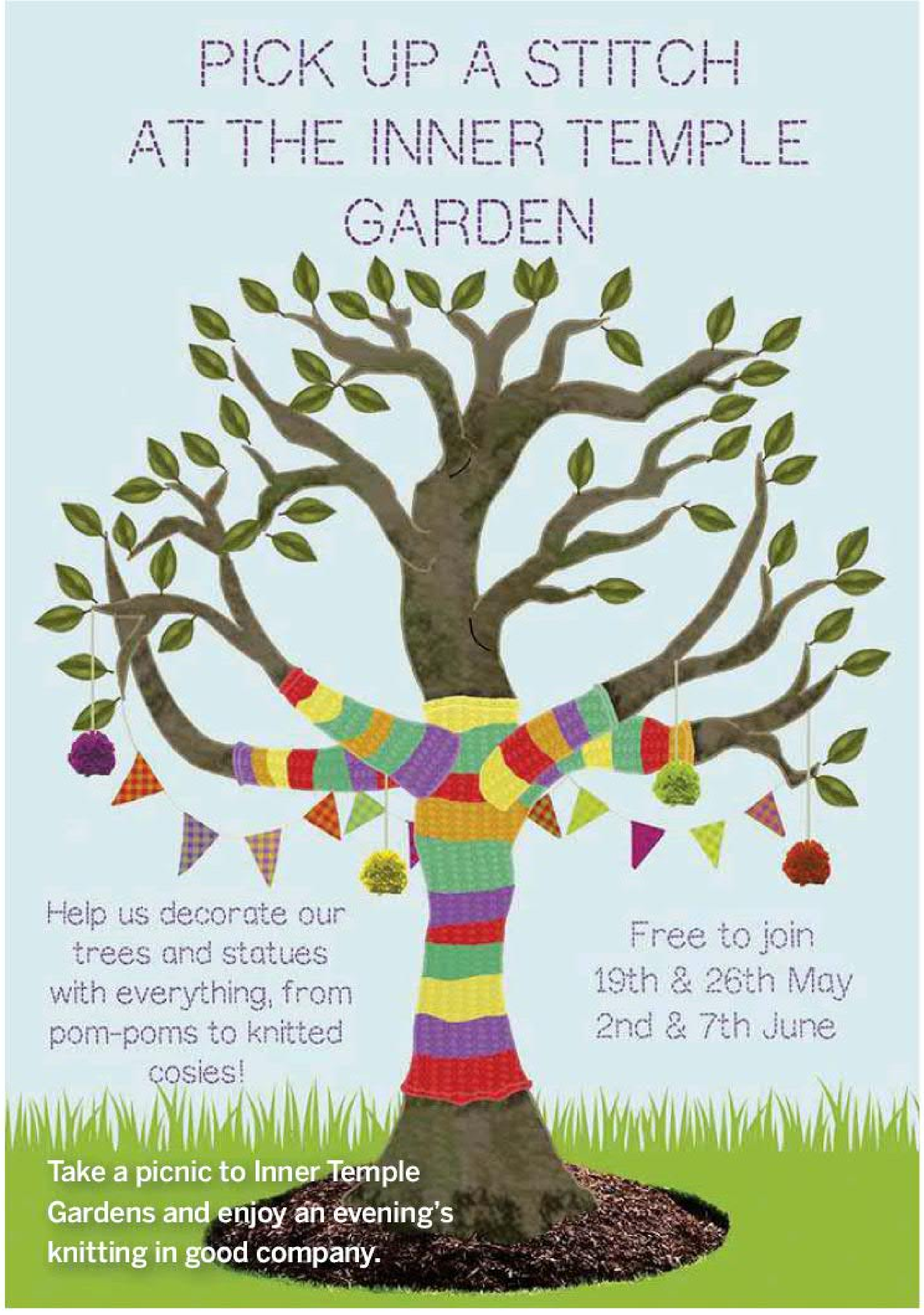
Contemporary Green
Even if you can't get out to one of the events, here's an eBook of 100-word manifestos from garden writers and enthusiasts all of whom address the question of 'How do we cultivate our garden?' This is free to download or print and share with friends and should get you thinking about what it means to garden.
• Free to download from modernmint.co.uk

Floral Flotilla
If you have a boat, or some form of river craft, you're invited to deck it out in a horticultural theme and join the Floral Flotilla as it parades the river at Henley-on-Thames. 16 May. Participants need to register with victoria.newton@btinternet.com
• Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire.

Drawing Squares of Georgian London
Three-hour workshop led by two specialists (a painter and a historian), taking in three of London's historic squares: Bedford Square Gardens, Tavistock Square and Brunswick Square. After considering their history, there will be the opportunity to spend time drawing the gardens. 16-17 May. Please sign up for a session at gillyhatch@gmail.com
• Bedford Square Gardens, London WC1B.

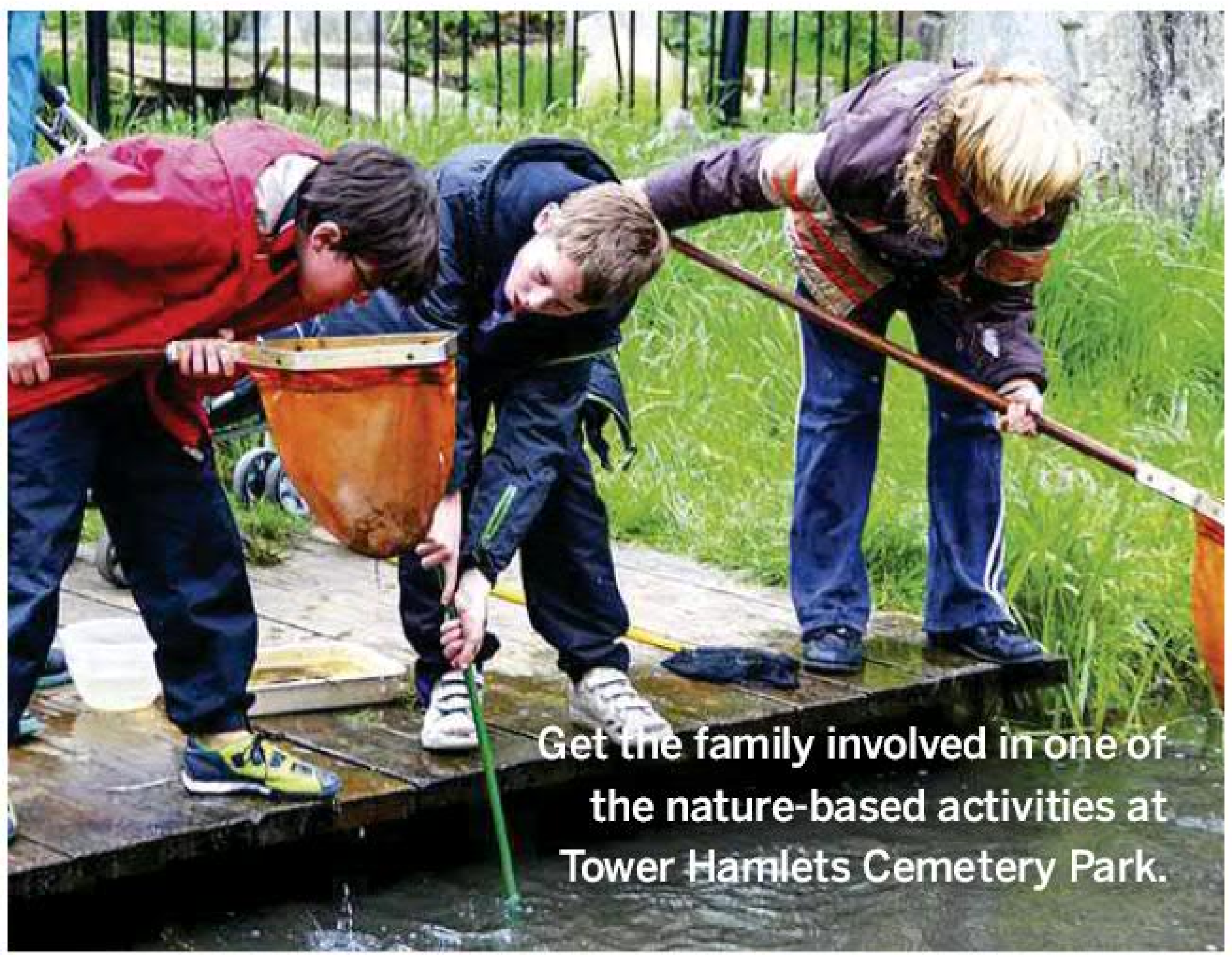

Cross-Pollination
Three Garden Artists in Residence
Work from Great Dixter, Sissinghurst Castle Garden and Sussex Prairies Garden
Anne Kelly
Rosie MacCurrach
Louise Pettifer

Three artists in residence show their work inspired by three iconic gardens.


PICK UP A STITCH AT THE INNER TEMPLE GARDEN
Help us decorate our trees and statues with everything, from pom-poms to knitted cosies!
Free to join
19th & 26th May
2nd & 7th June

Take a picnic to Inner Temple Gardens and enjoy an evening's knitting in good company.

Spend a crafty morning making a needle-felted bird.



Get the family involved in one of the nature-based activities at Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park.

Do we need thinkingardens? Supper Debate

Thinkingardens is an online magazine hosted by garden writer Anne Wareham who asks us to consider new ways of thinking about gardens. To celebrate its tenth year Anne is inviting guests to a supper debate to consider 'Do we still need thinkingardens? And if we do, what for?' 17 May. Tickets £30 to include wine and dinner. Booking essential.
• Coach & Horses pub, Soho, London W1F. thinkingardens.co.uk

Pick up a Stitch – Inner Temple Garden

Visit one of London's largest private gardens at Inner Temple and join in the Tuesday evening pop-up knitting club to create decorations for the garden's trees and statues – everything from pom-poms to cosies. Basic knitting skills taught. 19, 26 May and 2 June. Also garden open day on 7 June.
• Inner Temple Garden, London EC4Y. innertemple.org.uk

Cross Pollination

Exhibition of work, including drawings, textiles, paintings and printmaking, from three artists who have had residencies at iconic gardens: Rosie MacCurrach at Great Dixter, Anne Kelly at Sussex Prairies Garden, and Louise Pettifer at Sissinghurst Castle Garden. You can also take part in garden art and craft activities. 29 May.
• Shed Studio, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN4 9HP. annekellytextiles.com

> *The Fringe is going from strength to strength and is now a fixture on the gardens calendar. This year I'm really pleased to see such a wide range of projects – particularly in satellite cities.*
>
> TIM RICHARDSON, FRINGE DIRECTOR

Felted birds and pods

Join textile artists Women of the Cloth to make a needle-felted bird or wet-felted bird pod. £5 for materials, suitable for ages 8+. 30 May. Book in advance on info@slbi.org.uk.
• South London Botanical Institute, London SE24. See also www.slbi.org.uk

Oh Beehive

Feel the buzz at Sussex Prairies bee-related week with events including a trail of bee factoids and advice from local beekeepers and bee-keeping items from a local blacksmith and woodworker. 1-7 June (excluding Tuesday 2 June).
• Sussex Prairies, Henfield, West Sussex BN5 9AT. sussexprairies.co.uk

My Favourite Year

Eminent garden writers Tania Compton, George Plumptre and Tim Richardson choose a year when they think British gardens were at their best. Are British gardens better than they ever were, or was there a golden age of gardens that is long passed? 3 June, 6.30pm.
• Garden Museum, London SE1. gardenmuseum.org.uk

Please remember, this is just a selection of events taking place. Find out more, including times and any costs involved, for these and all the other events taking place at this year's Chelsea Fringe by visiting chelseafringe.com.

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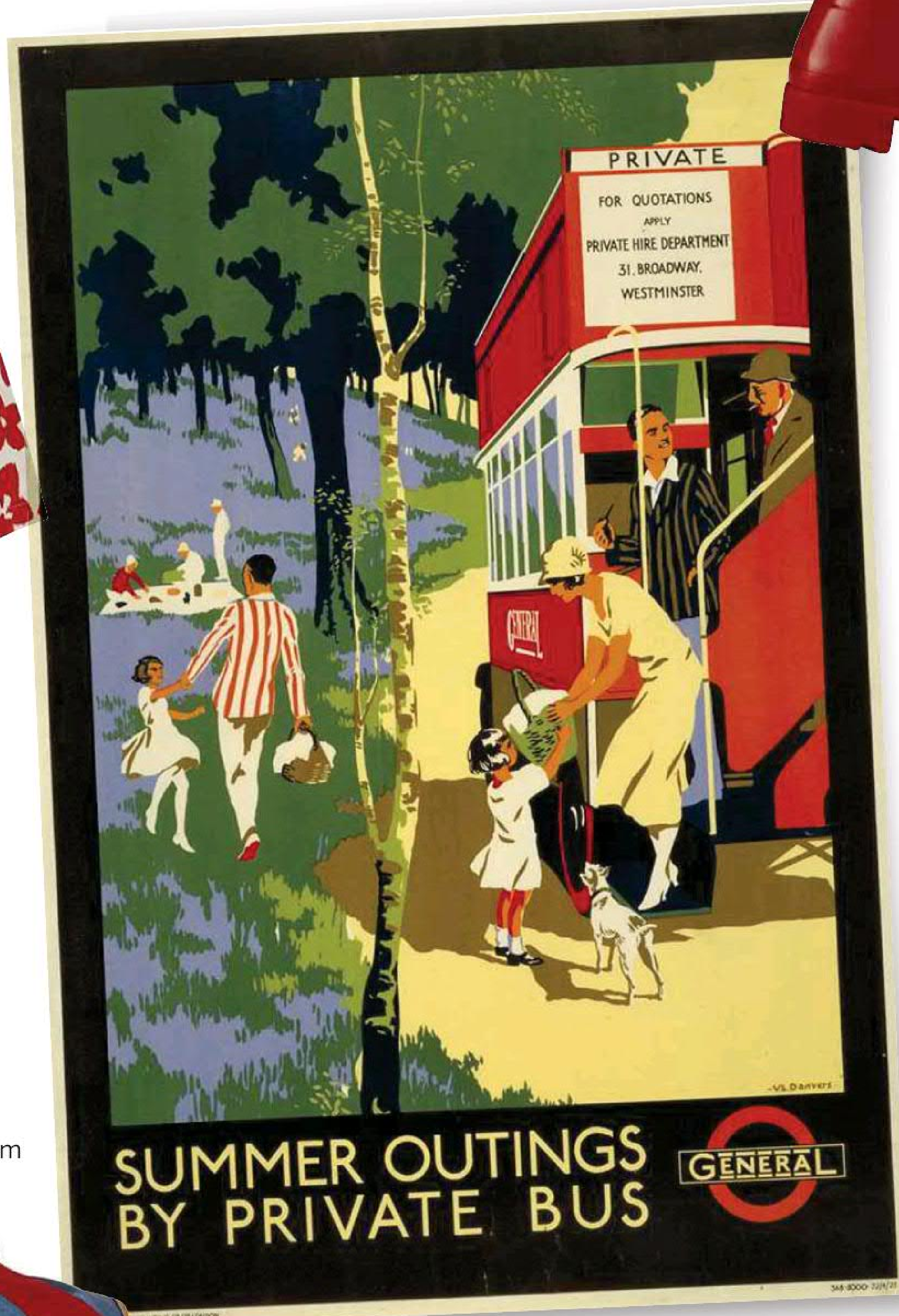
Hunter Original Tour foldable wellies, red (bag not included), £85, 01989 730217, thewellyshop.com

Natsumi Dress, Natural/Vermillion, £125, 0333 400 5200, toa.st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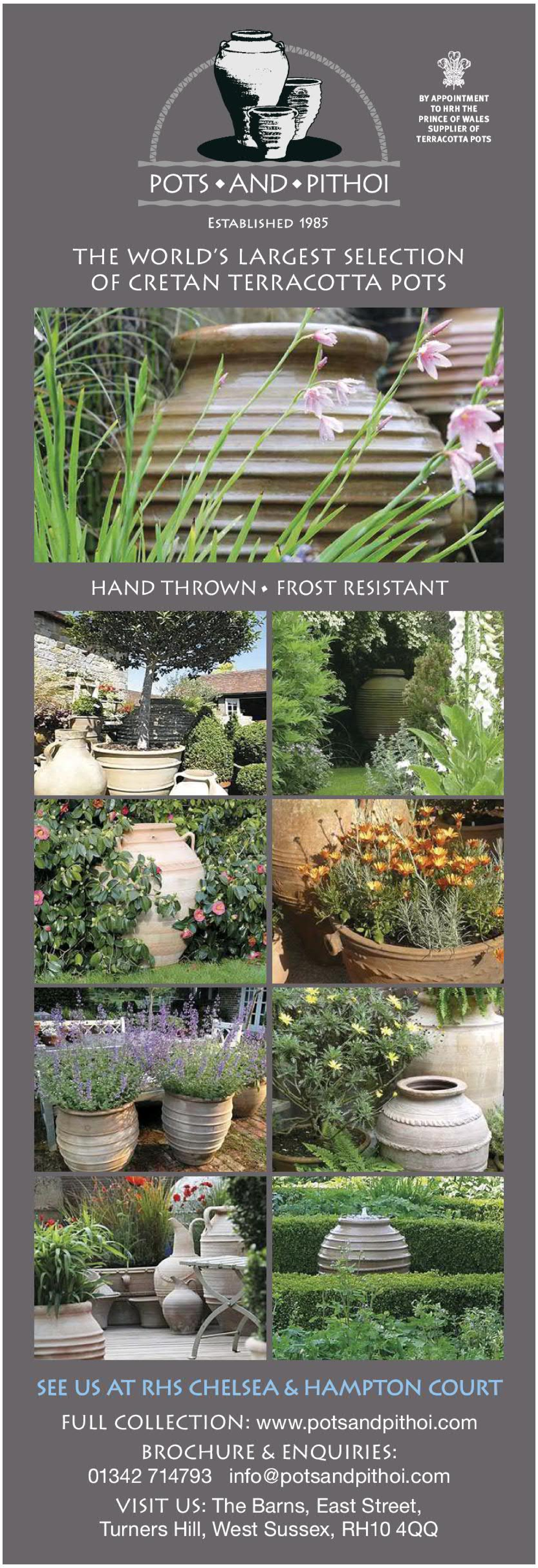
Women's Bean Boots by LL Bean, Bison dark brown, brick red, $129, +1 800-441-5713, llbean.com

Foldit Utility Cart, £269 inc delivery, utilitycarts.co.uk



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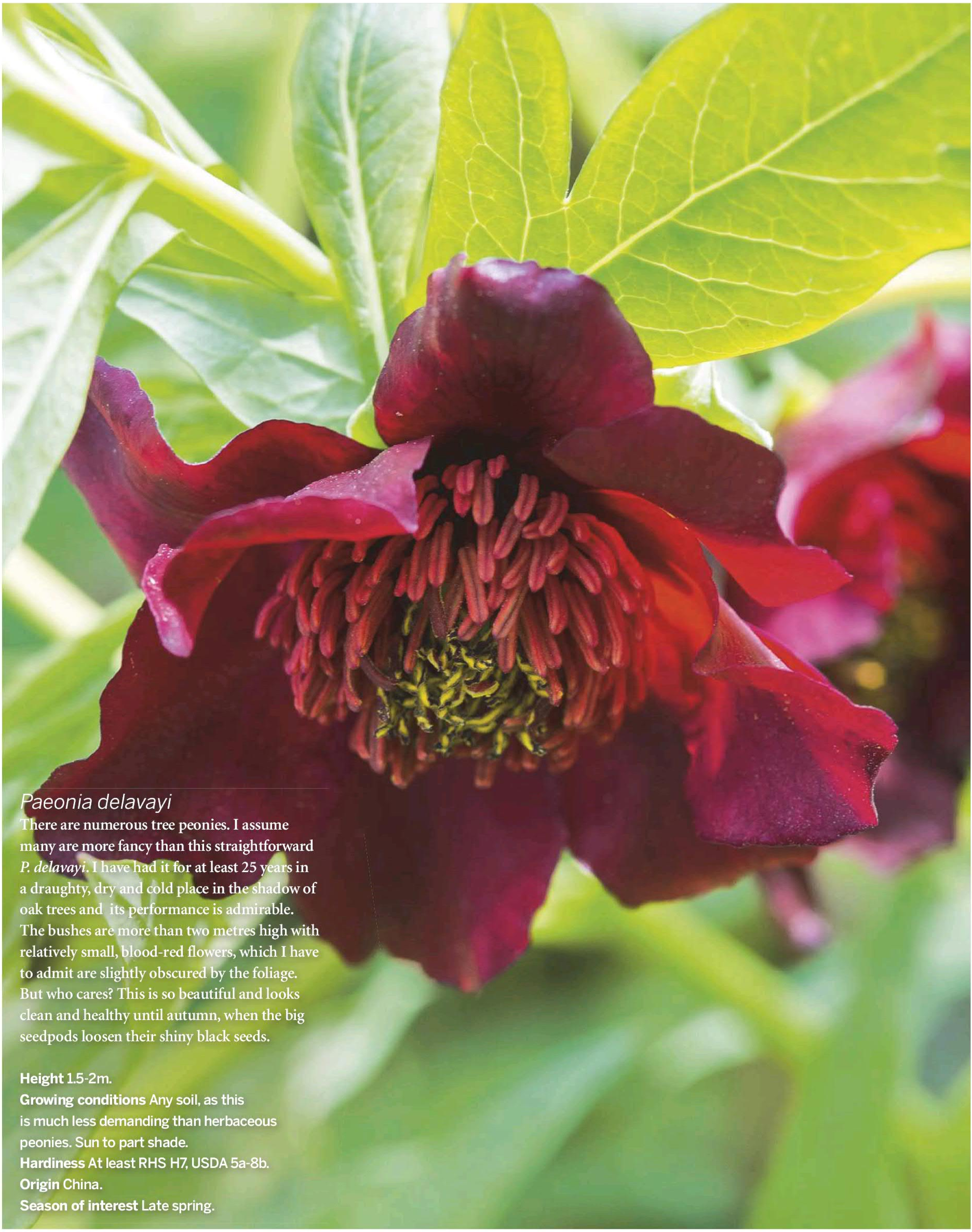
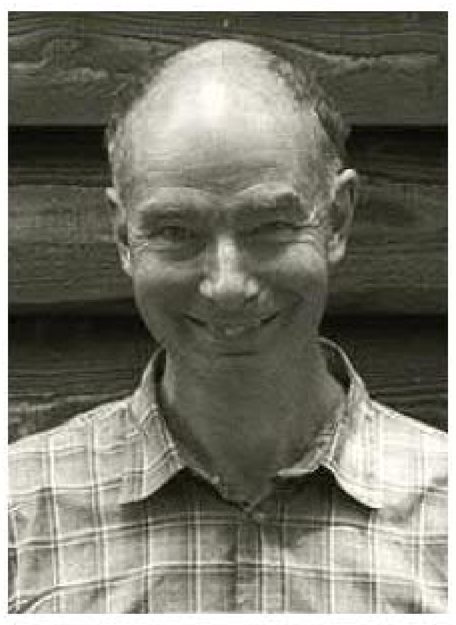


Paeonia delavayi

There are numerous tree peonies. I assume many are more fancy than this straightforward *P. delavayi*. I have had it for at least 25 years in a draughty, dry and cold place in the shadow of oak trees and its performance is admirable. The bushes are more than two metres high with relatively small, blood-red flowers, which I have to admit are slightly obscured by the foliage. But who cares? This is so beautiful and looks clean and healthy until autumn, when the big seedpods loosen their shiny black seeds.

Height 1.5-2m.
Growing conditions Any soil, as this is much less demanding than herbaceous peonies. Sun to part shade.
Hardiness At least RHS H7, USDA 5a-8b.
Origin China.
Season of interest Late spring.



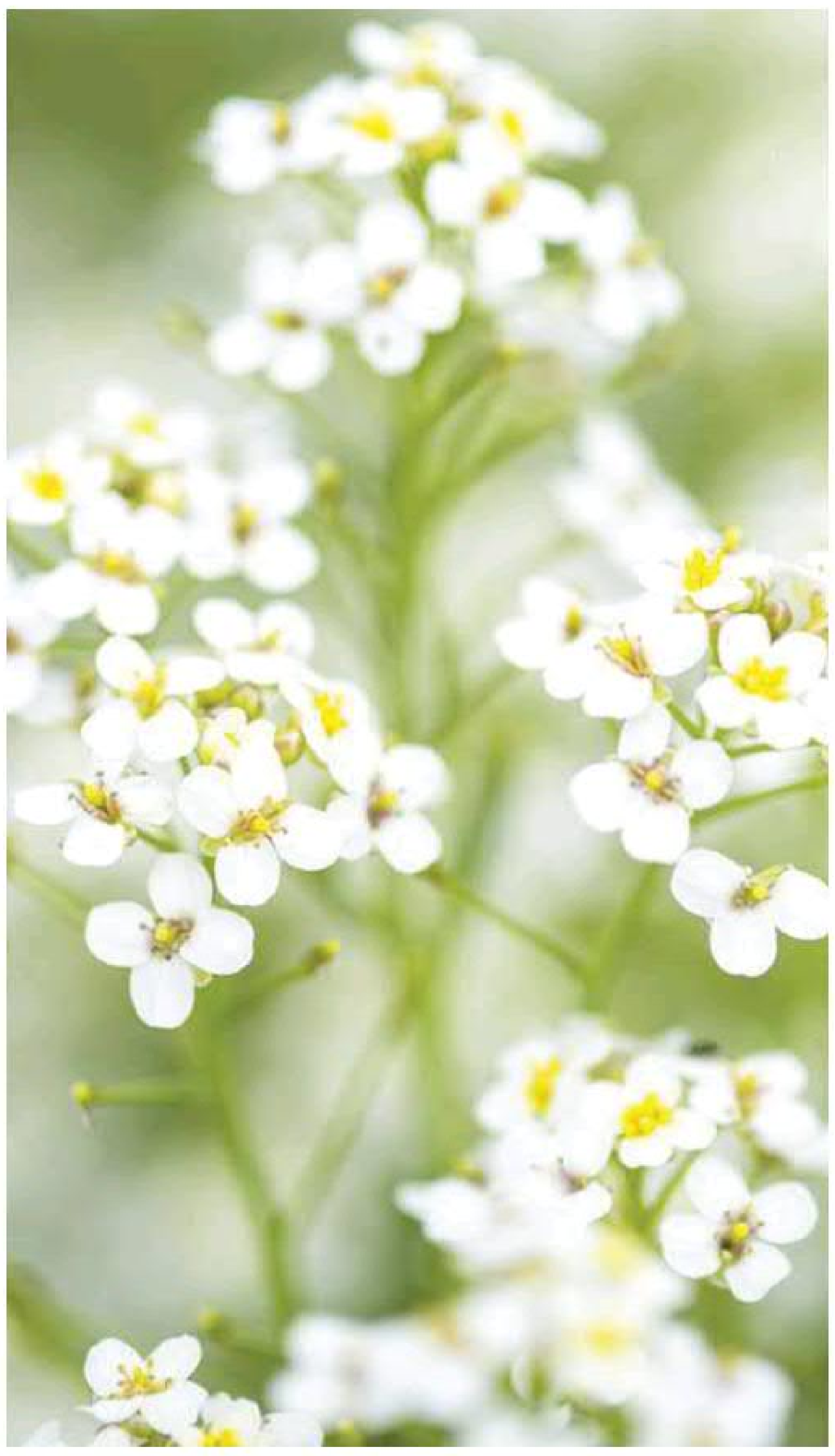
CHARLIE HOPKINSON

May plants

There's a wealth of plants that look good in May, but how to pick the best? Hans Kramer selects his favourites

WORDS HANS KRAMER PHOTOGRAPHS MAAYKE DE RIDDER

Hans Kramer co-owns De Hessenhof nursery in the Netherlands. hessenhof.nl



Crambe grandiflora

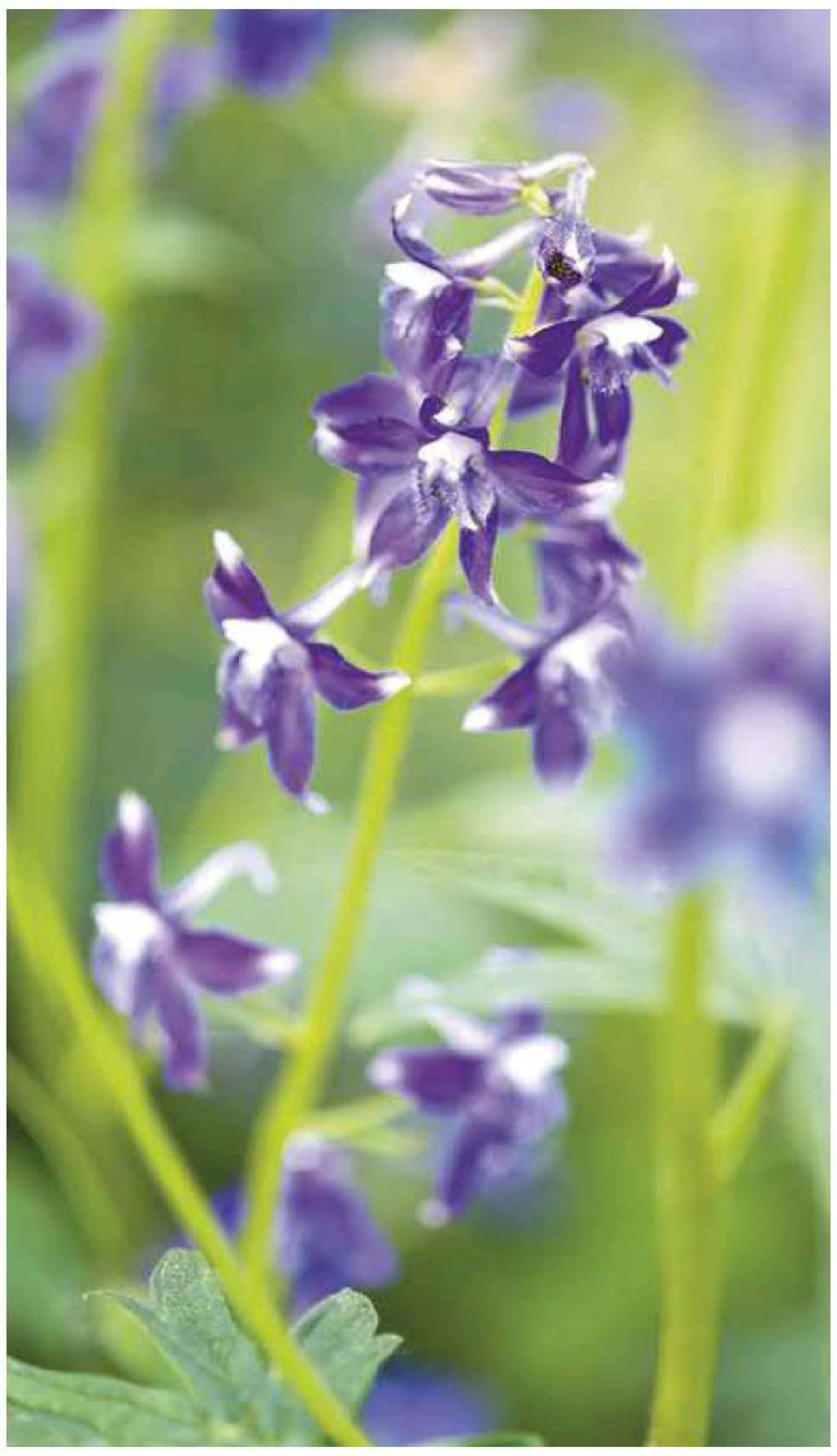
This rarely grown Caucasian species is the perfect mix between the tall *C. cordifolia* and the low *C. maritima*. I can never understand why such a good plant is found only in the wild. At the end of May the first flowers start to open and you can smell the unmistakable scent of rapeseed, although this is sweeter. The inflorescence is a wide multi-branched umbel with hundreds of white flowers, bigger than in *C. cordifolia*, with soft yellow centres. Seed is easily set and sometimes it germinates en masse in spring.

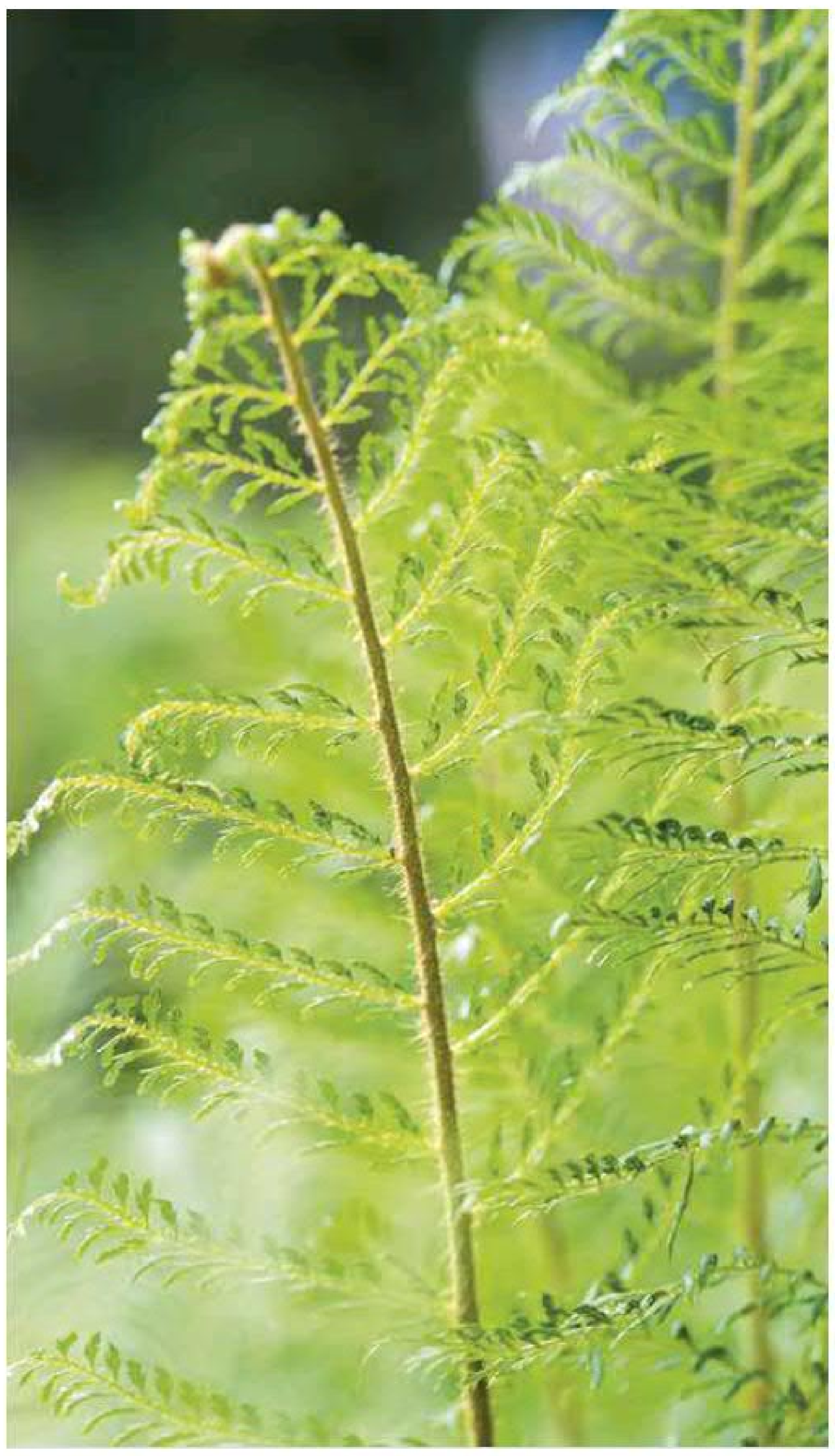
Height 1.2m.
Growing conditions Good fertile soil, preferably alkaline. A sunny spot.
Hardiness RHS H7.
Origin Caucasus.
Season of interest Late spring.

Delphinium trolliifolium

I've tried many delphiniums, but none grow as easily as this one. It's the first delphinium to flower here and most years the brilliant, deep-blue purple flowers start to appear at the end of April. They bloom in widely spaced inflorescences and the large, shiny, deeply incised leaves provide a good backdrop. The plant likes to grow informally between shrubs or other spring plants, such as wood anemones, where it will seed around, so don't be too tidy. By August everything is gone and the claw-like tubers stay safe in the ground until next year.

Height 60cm.
Growing conditions Humus-rich soil, dry in summer is no problem. Part shade.
Hardiness RHS H7.
Origin American pacific northwest.
Season of interest Late spring.

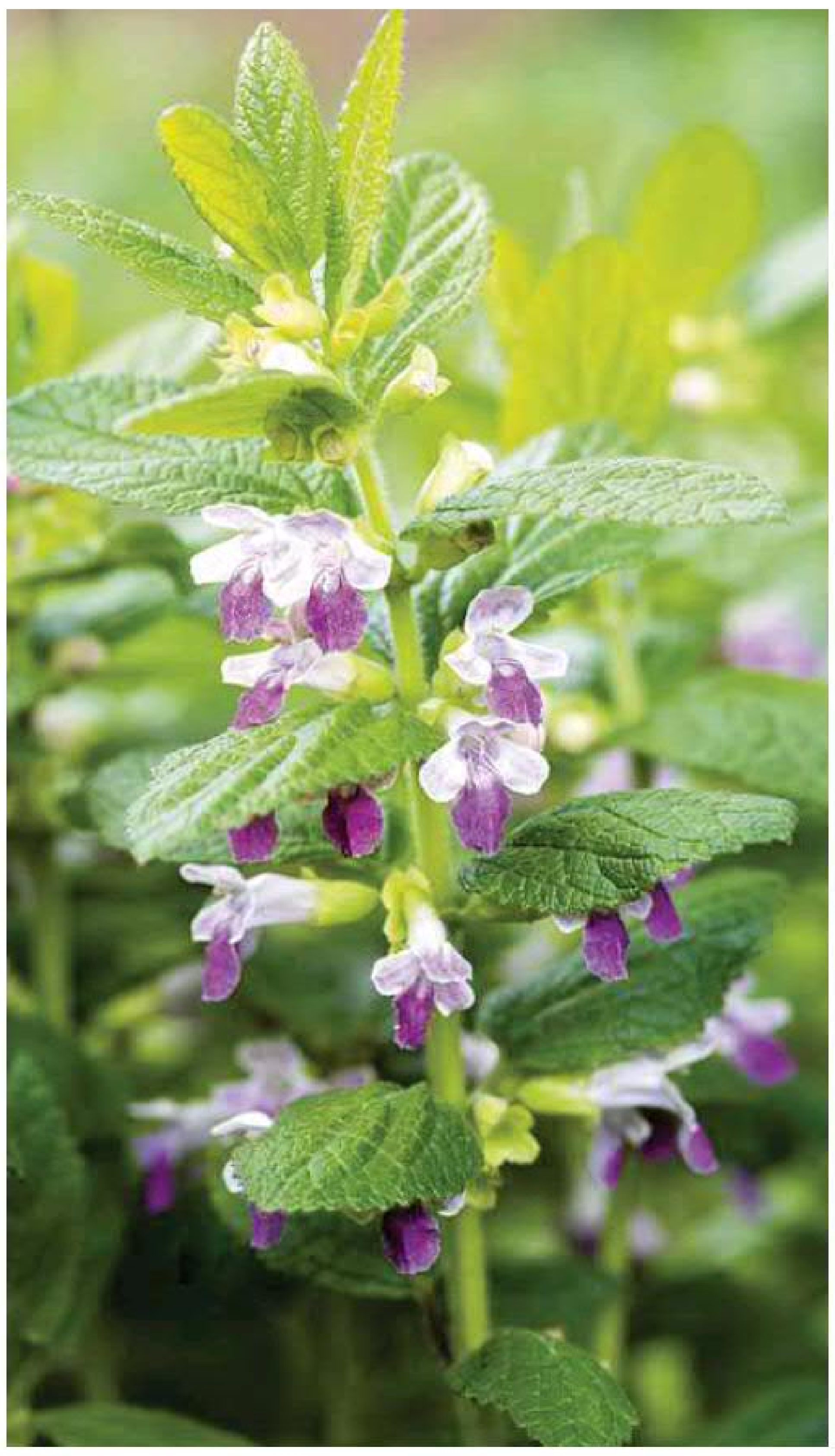




Polystichum setiferum Green Lace (= 'Gracillimum')

An American visitor to our nursery once described this magnificent fern as 'dynamite', and he was right. The fronds of this rare cultivar, a selected seedling of 'Pulcherrimum Bevis', are extremely fine, almost thread-like, and yet they remain green throughout winter. Old plants can grow to almost one metre across, but this will take years. You can't propagate from spores or bulbils – the only way is by division. But once you have it, you can be sure you'll have it for your whole lifetime.

Height 70cm.
Growing conditions Not too dry, alkaline is no problem. Part shade to full shade.
Hardiness RHS H7.
Origin Europe.
Season of interest Year round.



Melittis melissophyllum

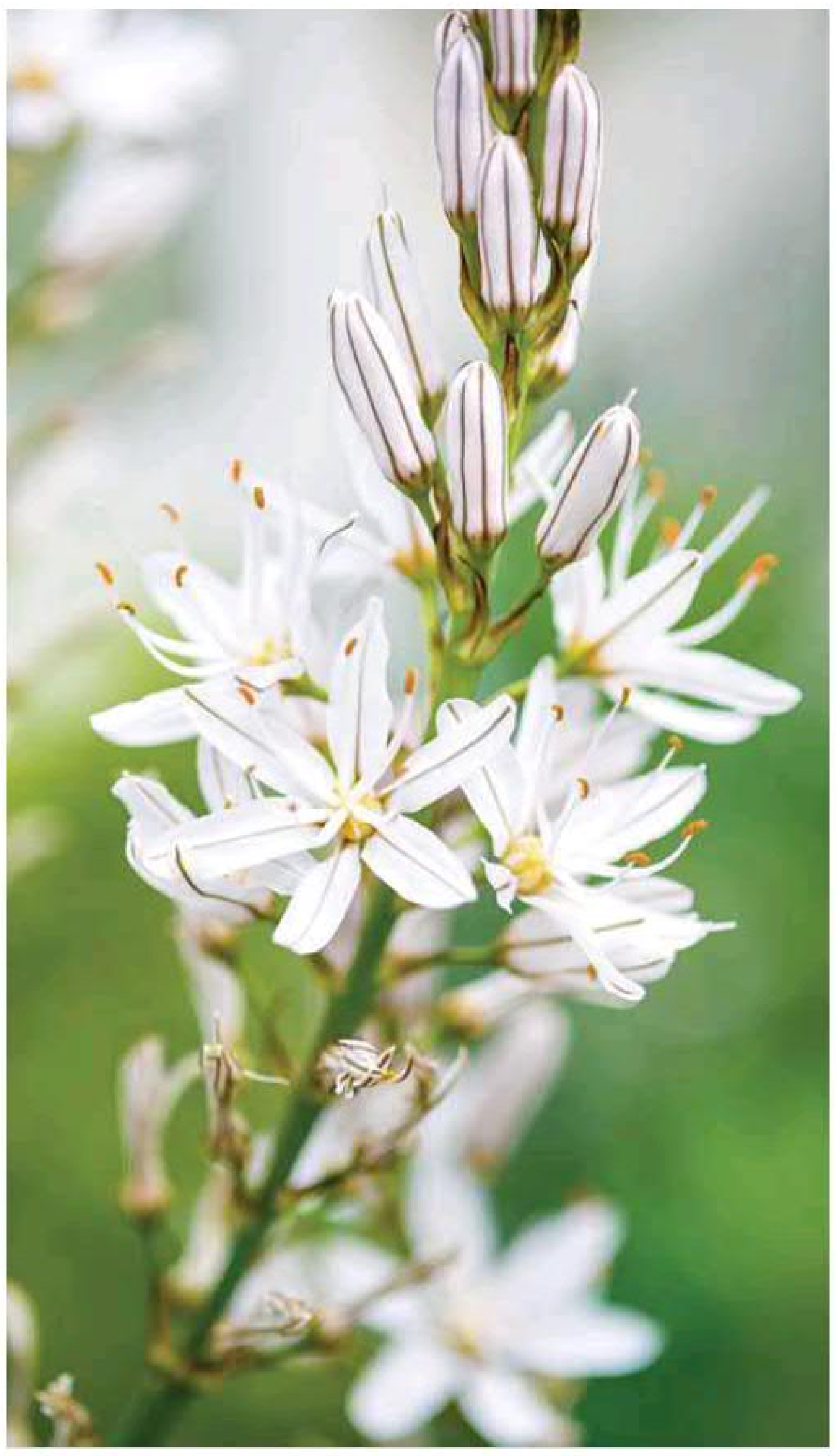
Many mistake this plant for a dead nettle, but this bastard balm has far more nobility. First, it does not spread and makes a neat round bush with attractive dark-green, deeply veined leaves. And in May, extremely attractive hooded flowers appear in whorls around the stem. Some forms have darker coloured lower lips that give the flower, which is relatively big, an exotic appearance. I like this rare British native, because it performs so well in May, which is always a quiet period while we wait for the big explosion of border perennials.

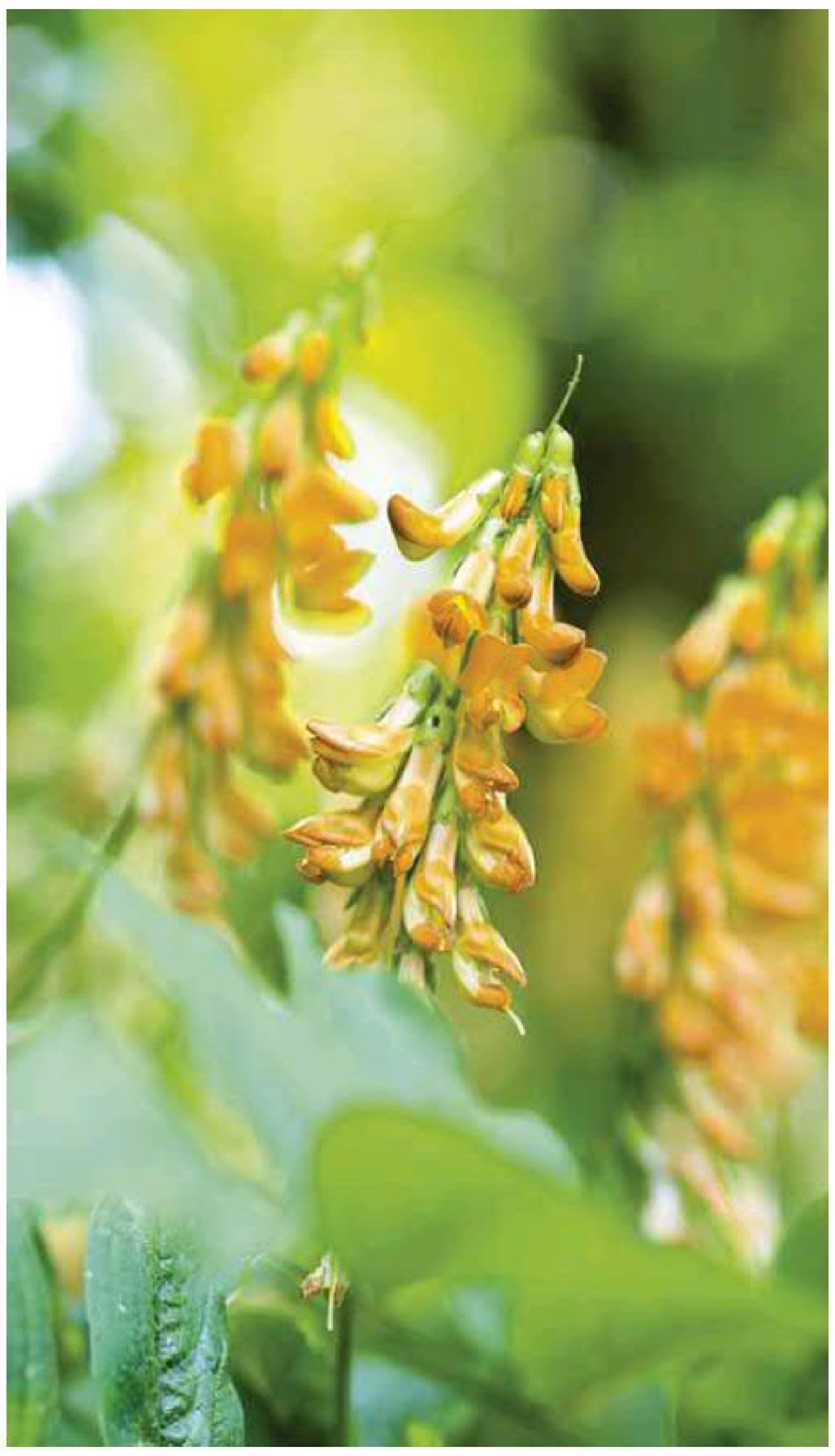
Height 40cm.
Growing conditions Any soil. Dappled shade.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 7b-10b.
Origin Europe.
Season of interest Late spring.

Asphodelus ramosus

This wonderful white plant, sometimes known as *Asphodelus cerasiferus*, takes at least four to five years from seed before the swollen rhizomes are of flowering size. But that doesn't matter, as you'll forgive the plant everything once the first star-shaped flowers open. The chalky white bracts, the brownish midvein and prominent orange stamens all harmonise perfectly. Although this is a Mediterranean plant, it never has any frost damage on our light sandy soil, even when the first rosettes start sprouting in February.

Height 1.5m.
Growing conditions Moderately fertile soil, dry soil is preferred. Full sun.
Hardiness RHS H5.
Origin Southern Europe, northern Africa.
Season of interest Late spring.





Lathyrus aureus

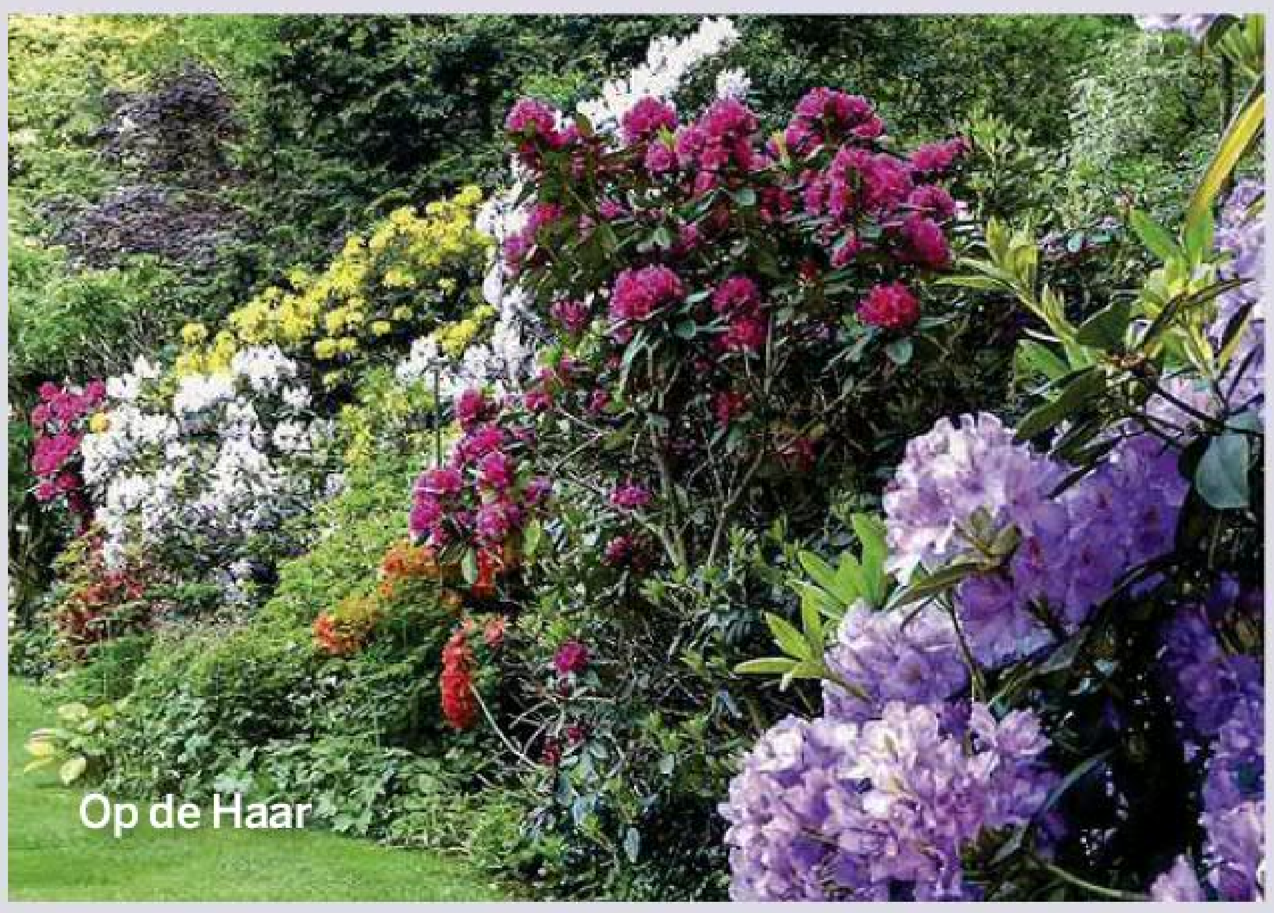
We grow at least three orange-flowering spring vetchling – *L. aureus*, *L. davidii* and *L. gmelinii* – and it can sometimes be difficult to tell them apart. *L. aureus* is our most robust, orange sweet pea and, with its wide forking branches, it takes up a big patch, and will grow everywhere, from full sun to quite deep shade. Even in shade, it freely produces yellow-ochre to orange flowers, which make a lovely and highly unusual cut flower. A hardy perennial cousin of the more familiar annual sweet pea, is it bushy and clump forming.

Height 50cm.
Growing conditions Any soil. Sun to part-shade to shade.
Hardiness RHS H7.
Origin Eastern Europe, Russia.
Season of interest Late spring.

Places to visit

Recommended places to see seasonal plants at their best, both here in the UK and in mainland Europe.

Not far from De Hessenhof is the **Op de Haar** woodland garden. It's owned by an English couple, John and Joyce Ramsbotham, who have been developing the five-acre site since 1991. Among existing ancient oak and beech trees, which line original drainage ditches (dug out in the 14th century to recover what was once a swamp), are collections of ferns, hostas, acers, rhododendrons, camellias and bamboo alongside other, less familiar plants. Op de Haar, Hoevelaken, near Amersfoort, Hoevelakense Boslaan 1, 3871KA Hoevelaken, the Netherlands. Tel +31 (0) 653753221, opentuinopdehaar.nl



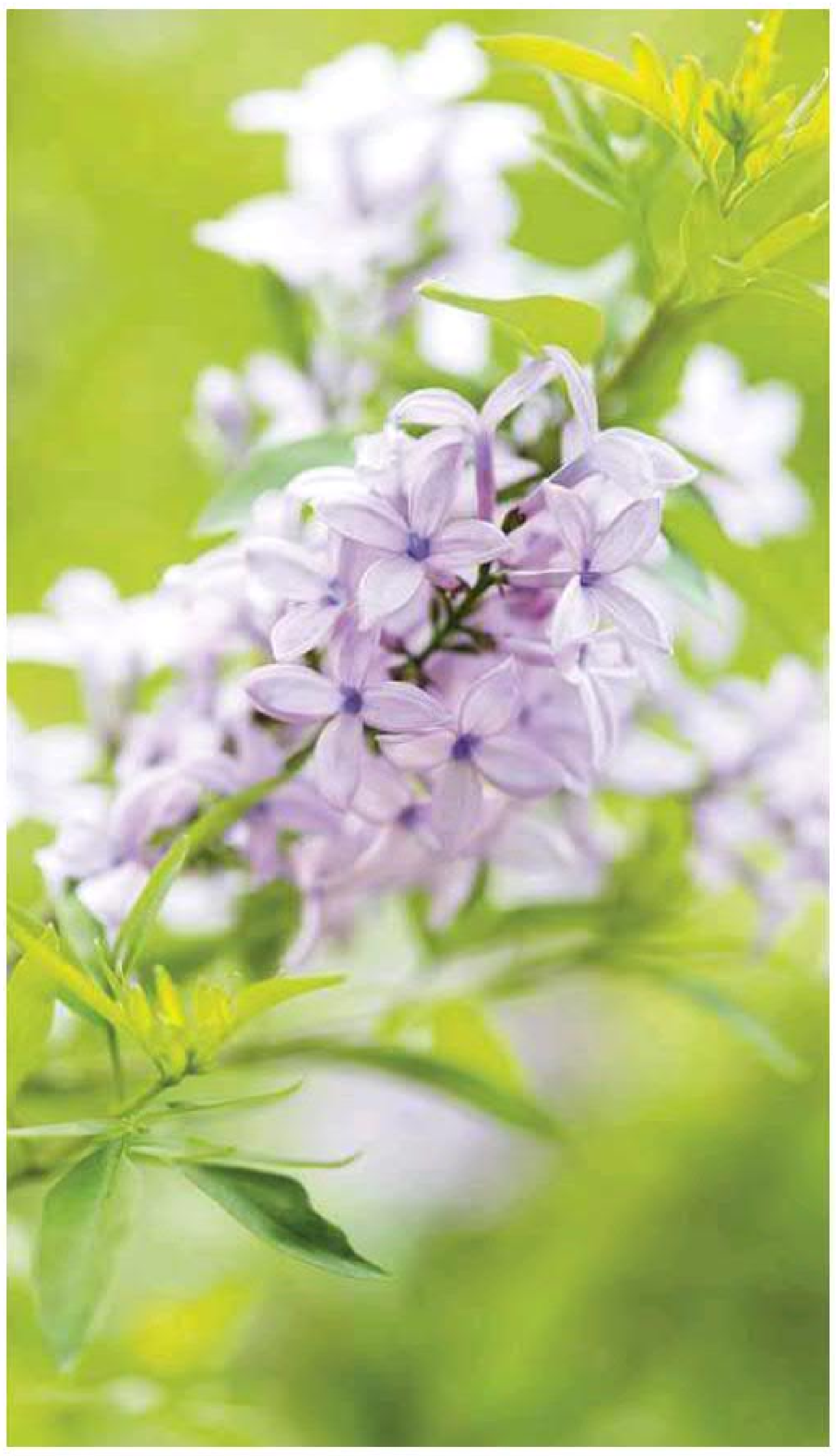
Op de Haar

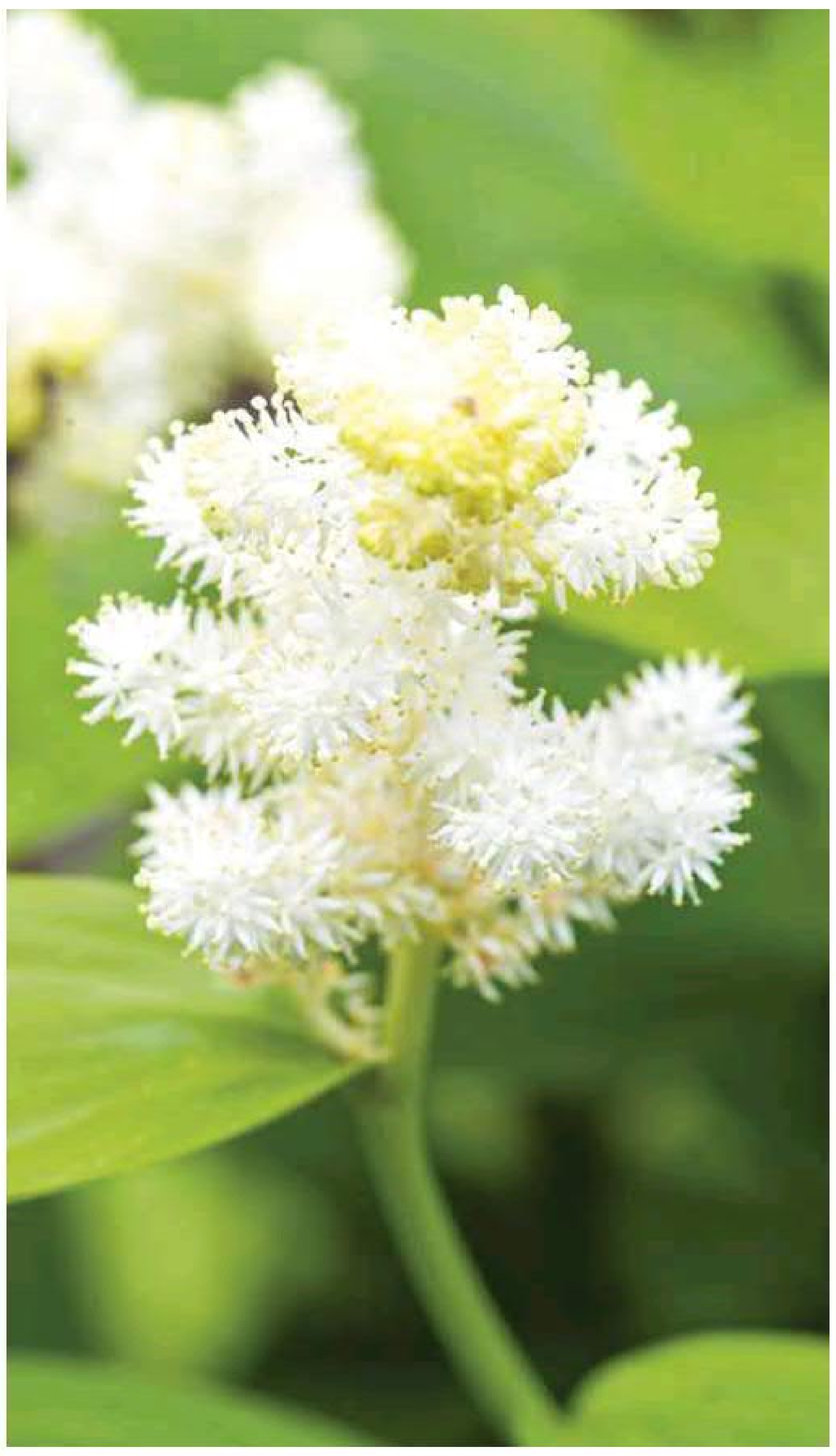
Back in the UK, many woodlands will be blanketed in bluebells. Some of the best are in the grounds of **Coton Manor**, Northamptonshire,

Syringa protolaciniata

This superb lilac is becoming more widely sold, sometimes as *S.* x *persica*. To admire all its qualities it's best grown on its own – I once saw a magnificent specimen standing alone in a large lawn. It has small, deeply cut, dark-green leaves, which are attractive but unusual for a lilac, making it hard to identify. But come May there's no doubt, as the lilac-blue flowers, formed on terminal as well as on axillary buds, speak for themselves. Another advantage is that you don't have to worry about suckers, as the plant roots easily from cuttings.

Height 3m.
Growing conditions Relatively fertile soil. Sun.
Hardiness RHS H6.
Origin Turkey, western Asia.
Season of interest Late spring.





Maianthemum racemosum subsp. *amplexicaule* 'Emily Moody'

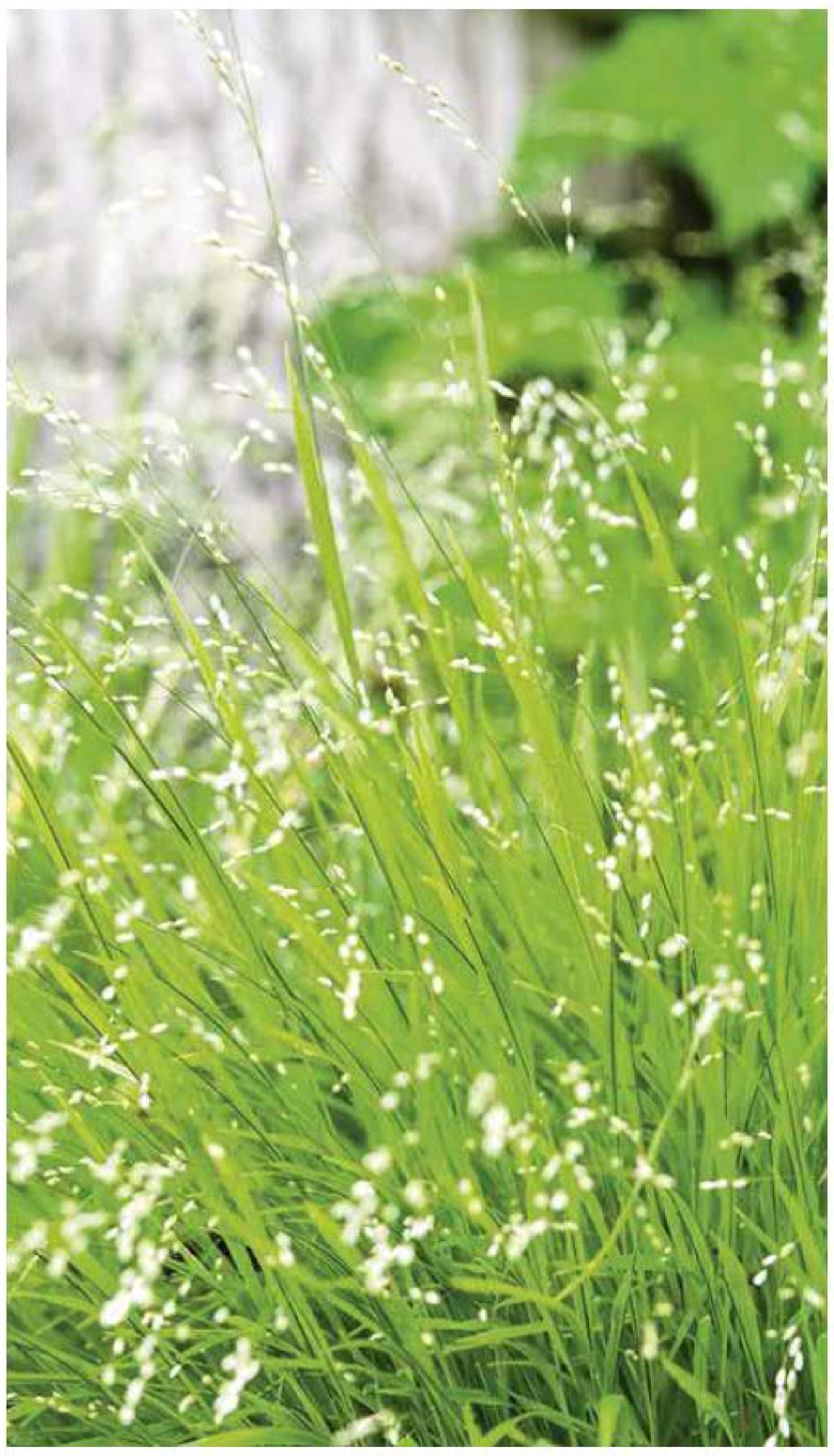
For me this is the ultimate false spikenard. We had the typical form for years, which was in fact an old garden clone that never had such an abundance of berries. In this 'Emily Moody' form, the berries, which are plentiful and turn from creamy-pinkish mottled pearls to a shiny red colour. Of course, these appear only after the creamy-white fluffy panicles make a big show in May. And this is a show not only for the eye – they also smell delicious.

Height 90cm.
Growing conditions Humus-rich soil, prefers acidic soil. Semi-shade to shade.
Hardiness RHS H7.
Origin North America.
Season of interest Late spring.

Melica uniflora

It's strange that we so easily adopt all the foreign grasses and neglect our native ones. In the Netherlands, as in the UK, I see lots of American *Panicum* and Chinese *Pennisetum*. But this native wood melic is just brilliant. It grows alongside our oak trees where it seeds around gently. Visitors never know what it is, but it when it flowers in May they all want it. Its graceful, bending panicles bear very pale green spikelets. Even in winter the tufts stay more or less green. There's also a variegated and a golden leafed form, but I have never seen the latter.

Height 40cm.
Growing conditions Not too dry. Semi-shade to shade.
Hardiness RHS H6.
Origin Europe, southwest Asia
Season of interest Late spring.



where pathways meander through a five-acre bluebell wood. You can also enjoy euphorbias, cardoons, echinops, angelica, sweet rocket and honesty among shrub roses, olearias and tree peonies. Open Tuesday to Saturday (12-5.30pm). Coton Manor, Coton, Northampton NN6 8RQ. Tel 01604 740219, cotonmanor.co.uk

Millichope Park in Shropshire will open on 3 May under the NGS. As well as bluebells there's a rare opportunity to see the Bouts Viola collection – the UK's largest collection of hardy, perennial, scented violas – at the Wildegoose Nursery Viola Open Day. From 2-6pm. Millichope Park, Munslow, Craven Arms, Shropshire SY7 9HA. Tel 01584 841890, boutsviolas.co.uk

No bluebells, but the **Walled Garden at Mells** in Somerset, is at its best in May and June. Sweet peas, alliums and poppies will be flowering within the 17th-century walls, where you can also buy plants, tuck into tea and cake or a wood-fired pizza, and rummage through a greenhouse full of vintage bric-a-brac. Open daily 10am-5pm. Rectory Garden, Selwood Street, Mells BA11 3PN. Tel 01373 812597, thewalledgardenatmells.co.uk

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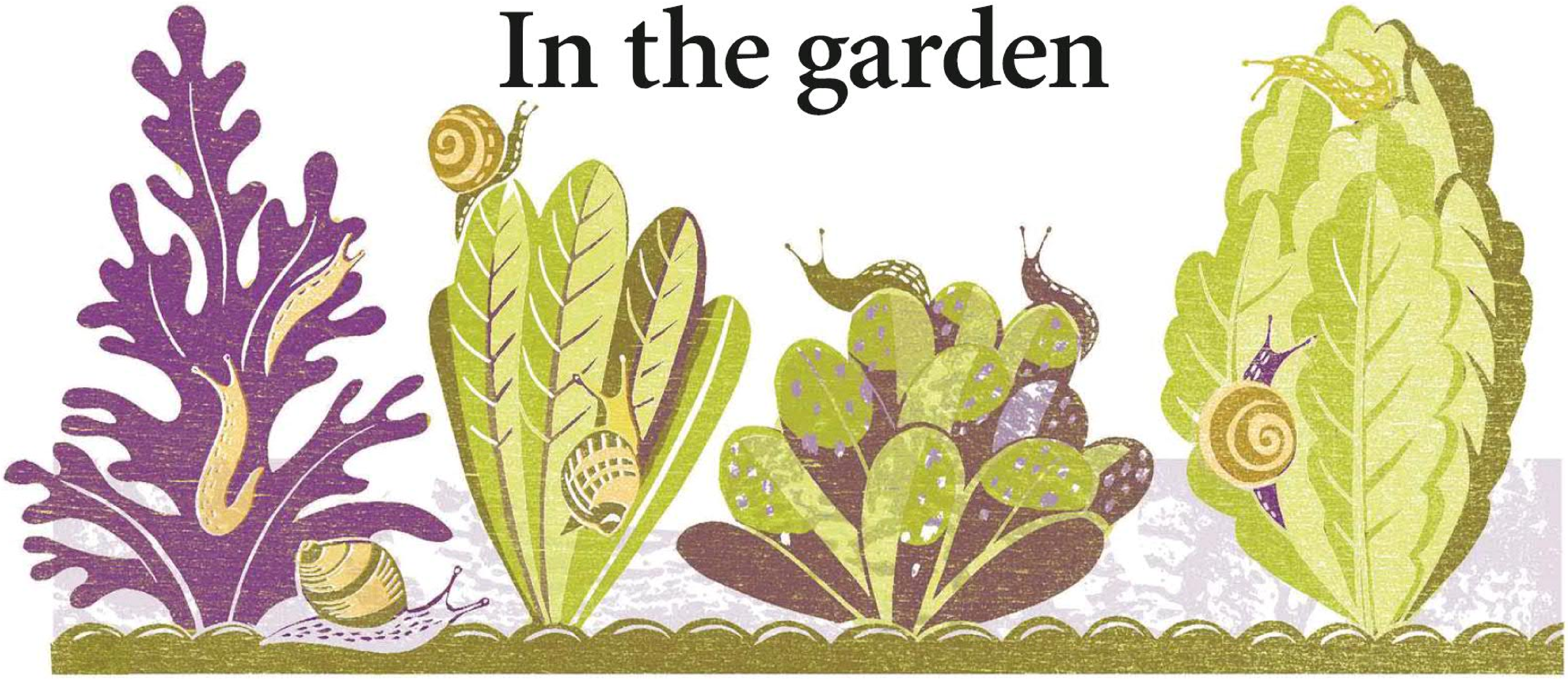
In the garden



May is a very busy month for gardeners so, in the absence of a 'gardening third eye', Jojo decides to go Zen rather than lose her cool

WORDS **JOJO TULLOH** ILLUSTRATIONS **SARAH YOUNG**

May is the month in which I long for a gardening third eye. In this heightened state I would become a paragon of focused efficiency. I would remember to earth up my potatoes and stay on top of weeds by running a hoe down the rows regularly, and not forget to thin newly germinated salad – and also take time to sow spinach, beetroot, carrot, radishes and turnips successionally at regular two-week intervals. As the polemicist William Cobbett observed 200 years ago: 'Almost every gardener could grow more by sowing less and doing this more often.'

While coolly measuring out my short rows, I would then take the time to prune my damson and my greengage trees while it's warm (this helps to prevent silver leaf disease), keep my extra eye out for slugs, snails and aphid infestation as well as continuing to tend to my seedlings and fragile potted-on plants on the windowsills at home. It's so easy to miss a slug on the bottom of a seed tray and find new growth eaten down to slime-topped stalks, or forget to bring in a batch of seedlings that are being hardened off outside. In addition to this I would pot on tomatoes and peppers before they became pot bound and remember to give newly planted fruit trees a thorough drenching once a week.

Perhaps the best way to approach this most hectic of gardening months is to remind yourself that gardening is supposed to be relaxing. Take a deep breath, go Zen and, above all, pace yourself – the growing season is a long distance event, not a sprint.

Having had decent but not marvellous pumpkin crops in the past, this year I am going to try something different. Last year my first sowing was decimated by snails and slugs, and those that survived only went on to make one or two small fruits. To provide plenty of food for this greedy crop I've already dug several bucket-sized holes and half-filled them with well-rotted muck and filled the top in with soil. When I feel confident that the threat of late frosts has passed (this will vary around the country) I'll bring my hardened-off plants to the plot.

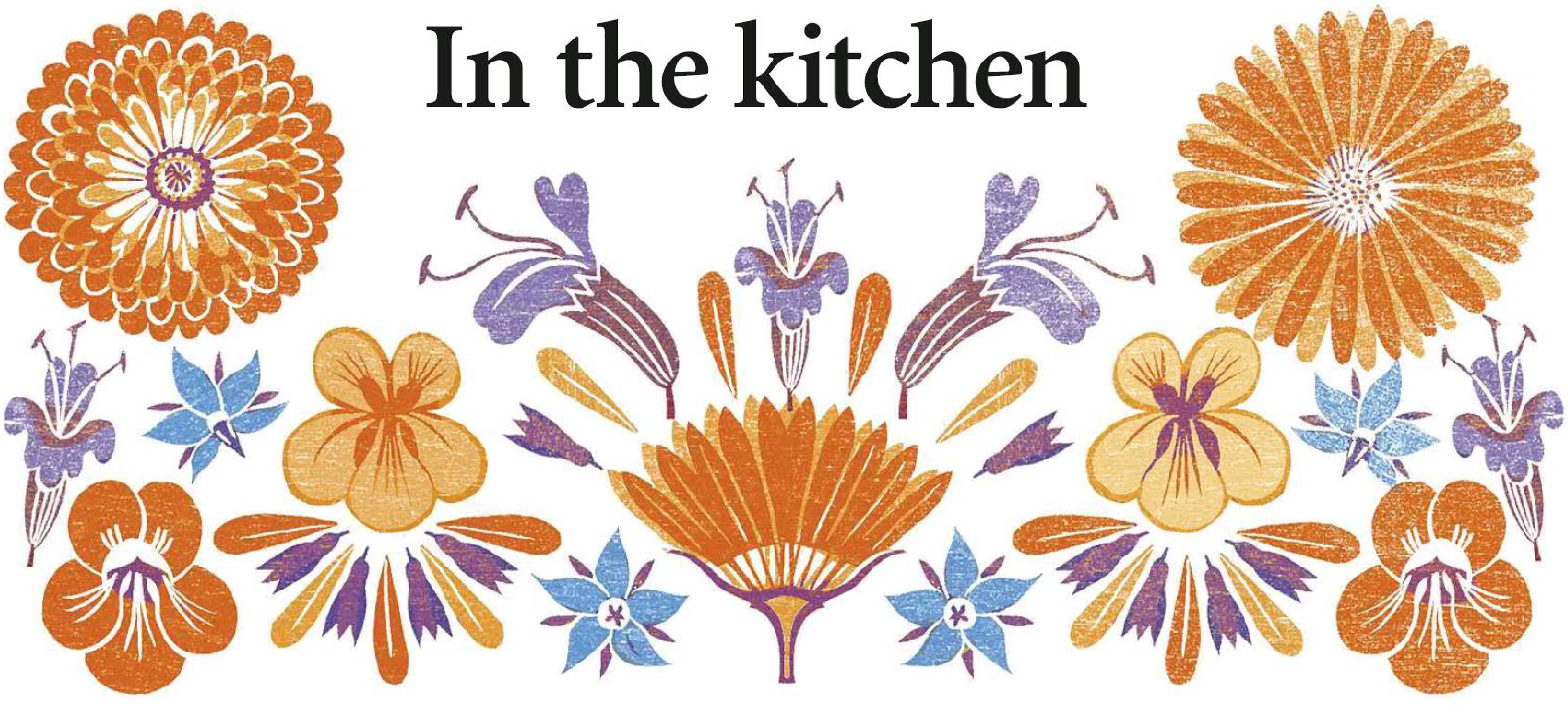
Once there I'll plant them on top of the muck with a frame of bamboo or strong wire hoops over the top. Then I'll take a clear polythene carrier bag and fit this over the frame, securing the bottom with an elastic band to make a smash-proof mini cloche that will provide heat as well as protection from slugs. As an experiment I'm trying this method with two plants and two seeds sown direct, planted edgeways and 5cm deep, all roughly 150cm apart. Watch carefully; then, when a male flower has formed on each shoot, cut it short after a female flower (with a round mini pumpkin attached) has formed behind it. This way more fruits will form behind. 'Crown Prince' 'Uchiki Kuri' and the closely related 'Hokkaido' are three flavoursome cultivars.

▷

WHAT TO SOW NOW

- If you are a novice kitchen gardener then salad is the easiest and most rewarding crop to grow. You can grow so many more different leaves and herbs than you could ever buy in the shops and, on top of the immense variety of cultivars, the advantages in flavour and nutrition that eating soon after picking confers makes this the best of all summer vegetables. 'Little Gem' is a perennial favourite, but this year I am growing Cos lettuce 'Little Leprechaun' for its crisp, red leaves (stormy-hall-seeds.co.uk) and 'Marvel of Four Seasons' plus the Cos Romaine lettuce 'Forellenschluss', an Austrian heirloom variety splashed with red freckles (the name means 'speckled like a trout'), and the fast-growing Italian oak leaf lettuce 'Catalogna' (chilternseeds.co.uk). For a good selection try a mixture such as Franchi Seeds Easy Salad Mix (seedsofitaly.com).
- If you are plagued by slugs try growing peppery leaves such as rocket, mizuna, mibuna, komatsuna (mustard spinach) as well as 'Red Giant', Wasabi type (best eaten young when it has a horseradish flavour), all from Chiltern Seeds. Slugs find these much less palatable.

In the kitchen



Cooking with flowers is an obvious choice in May when gardens and countryside alike are magnificently in bloom. Scattering a handful of red and orange nasturtium flowers or bright, star-shaped borage flowers over your salad adds peppery spice, cucumber notes and plenty of colour to your salad bowl, but this year why not be a bit more ambitious? Try growing *Hyssopus officinalis* – not only are the dense spikes covered in tiny, intense blue flowers beloved of bees, but when combined with a salad of mixed leaves and chopped boiled eggs the blooms make a memorable lunch. The flavour is quite strong so go easy.

The petals of pot marigold (*Calendula officinalis*), also known as 'poor man's saffron', were once used to colour butter and cheese yellow. You can add the petals to salads, as well as rice, egg and seafood dishes where their subtle spicy flavour can be appreciated without being overwhelmed. You could also try drying the flowers and using them later on.

For a new take on an old favourite, try a lemon and marigold drizzle cake. Add three tablespoons of marigold petals to the sponge mixture (three eggs, 150g butter, 175g caster sugar, zest of one lemon, 200g self-raising flour, one teaspoon baking powder, 75ml milk) and bake in a lined loaf tin. Finish with a crunchy lemon and flower crystal topping. After baking the cake make eight small holes in the top, add a handful of petals to a mixture of two tablespoons each of caster and icing sugar and the juice of one lemon, then drizzle over the cake before popping back in the oven for five minutes until crystals form.

Early in the season small green gooseberries are at their best for pies, jams and jellies. If you are feeling ambitious you could try making a pie with a raised hot water or pork pie crust (but sweetened rather than seasoned). This old Nottinghamshire speciality was traditionally filled with green gooseberries (and plenty of sugar) instead of meat. After baking, melted apple jelly was poured in through a slit in the lid and the pie served cold with a firm set jelly. Jane Grigson has an extensive recipe in her book *Good Things*. A less labour-intensive approach (suited to riper, sweeter gooseberries) is to take 200g of sweet pastry and line a 20cm tart tin. Bake it blind with pastry beans, then arrange 300g of topped and tailed gooseberries (using scissors for this job is easiest) in the shell and pour over a custard made from two egg yolks, 50g caster sugar and 250ml single cream whisked together. Bake at 180°C for 30 minutes. Serve at room temperature with whipped cream sweetened with a tablespoon of icing sugar. □

> Scattering a handful of nasturtium flowers or bright, star-shaped borage flowers over your salad adds peppery spice, cucumber notes and plenty of colour

RECIPES

Salad dressings

We all have our tried and trusted vinaigrette recipe (mine is a mix of olive oil, lemon juice and Dijon mustard) but why not consider adding a small minced shallot to your vinegar half an hour before you make it up into a dressing, or a teaspoon of fresh, finely chopped tarragon with a lemon dressing? Try this **garlic and lemon dressing** with crisp, Little Gem lettuce leaves and **sourdough croutons**. These are a great way of using up your crusts: cube **stale sourdough bread**, put in a bowl and dribble over some **olive oil**, **salt and pepper**, mix with your hands until the bread is well coated and spread out on a baking tray. Crisp up slowly in a medium oven (about 150°C) the spread out on to kitchen roll (out of view of kitchen visitors, who tend to munch them all up before dinner time). Make the dressing by taking a good **pinch of sea salt** and grind to a paste with a **clove of garlic** before whisking in **½tsp minced lemon zest, 3tbsp lemon juice, and 5tbsp olive oil.**

- If you grow bitter leaves, such as endives and chicory, try them with this **citrus dressing**: whisk together **½tsp of minced orange zest** (navel or clementine, the variety is up to you), **2tbsp freshly squeezed orange juice, 1tbsp white wine vinegar** and a **good pinch of salt** before adding **3tbsp olive oil** (not fruity or too strongly flavoured).

Fennel pollen and elderflowers

Try collecting fennel pollen from wild or garden plants, store in a jam jar and sprinkle over roast or braised pork for an intensely aromatic flavour combination, or add the pollen to pastry for savoury tarts or fennel scented parmesan cheese biscuits. Towards the end of the month start looking out for elderflowers to use in jellies and cordials and to flavour syrup for poached peaches.

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Mark Cox

A former City worker, Mark is now head gardener at Folly Farm, where the garden was designed by Lutyens and Jekyll, and more recently Dan Pearson

PORTRAIT ANDREW MONTGOMERY

Earliest gardening memory Working with my grandfather in his garden in Manchester – pulling rhubarb stems and the smell of ripening tomatoes that permeated the greenhouse on the occasional sunny day.

Who has inspired your career the most? Stephen Crisp, head gardener at Winfield House, Regent's Park, London, has been my mentor and friend for many years. I've never seen him give up the opportunity to push the horticultural cause or challenge people to think about the future of both gardening and gardeners.

If gardening is a career change, what did you do before? After studying Geography at Oxford, I went into the City. My epiphany was born out of being stuck underground on the Central Line in the middle of summer. Looking around at the stressed, pale and sweaty older men in suits, I thought: 'I don't want to be like that in 20 years'.

Favourite garden that has influenced you Parc André Citroën in Paris – pure genius and I try to visit every time I'm there. Having said that, I've totally fallen in love with Folly Farm and it inspires me daily.

With whom would you most like to have tea in the garden? I once managed to convince American landscape architect Martha Schwartz to give a lecture at Kew, and she had the audience eating out of her hand. I'd love to put her together with Stephen Fry, David Attenborough, Mary Berry and a good supply of gin and tonics.

Dream plant destination I've heard rumours of a valley in the high Himalayas, only accessible by foot, which is completely carpeted in flowers just after the snow-melt.

Biggest challenge facing gardeners today It takes years to train as a skilled horticulturist, and across the industry, salaries have failed to keep up with cost of living. I've trained apprentices in London who could barely afford the bus ride into work for a hard day's physical labour. It's sad to see our largest institutions advertising head gardener and other highly skilled roles on salaries that are lower than that of a cleaner at a train station.

Guiding horticultural principles A sensitivity to the environment, ecological sustainability, and an appreciation of soils, growing media and plant communities.

Favourite gardening books Tony Lord's *The Encyclopedia of Planting Combinations*. I can lose myself in that tome for hours,

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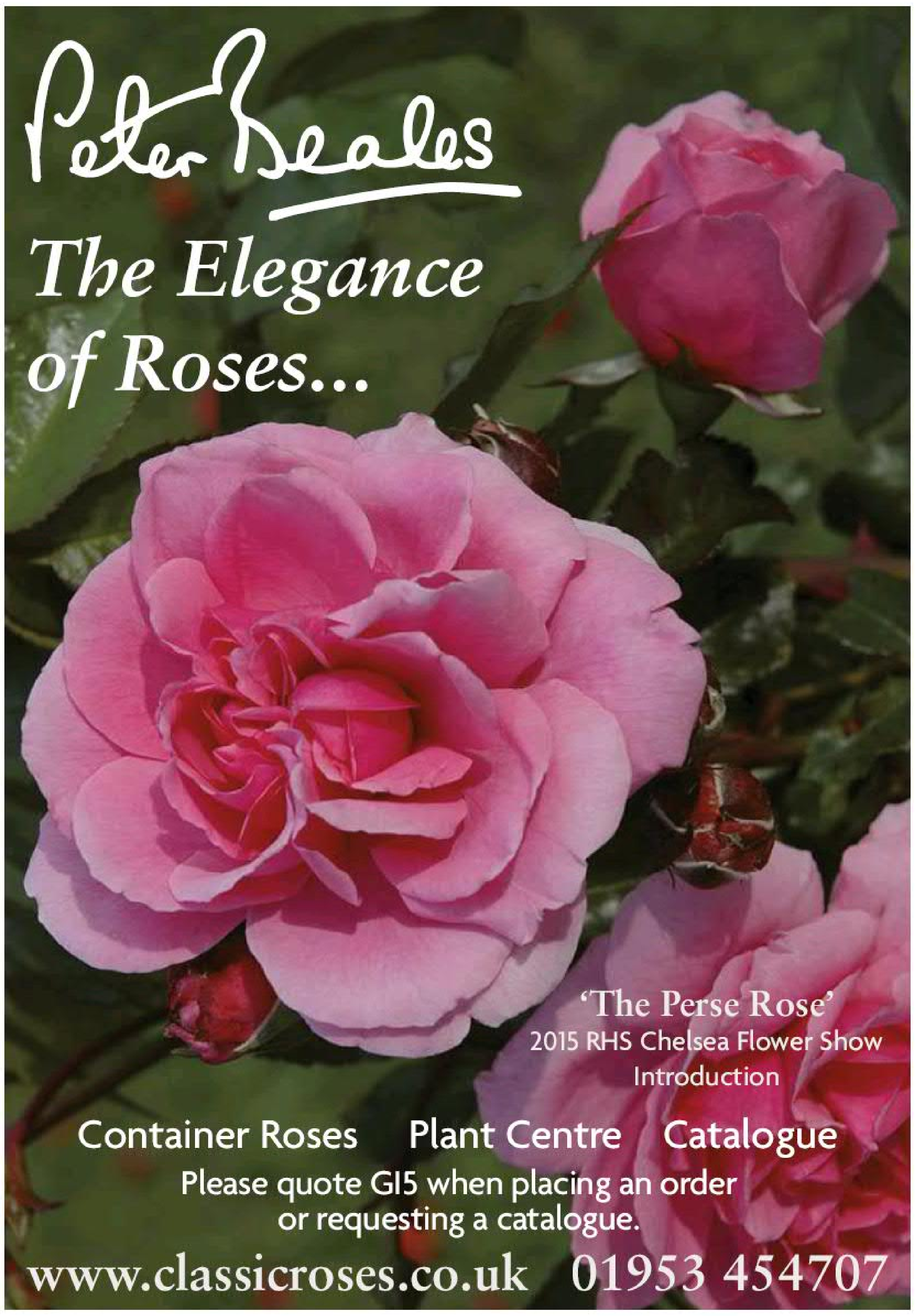

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Chelsea 2015 preview

We talk to some of the designers of this year's show gardens to find out more about their style and approach, plus we discuss the emerging trends and hottest plants

Luciano Giubbilei's Best in Show garden from Chelsea 2014.

GAP PHOTOS / J S SIRA - DESIGNER: LUCIANO GIUBBILEI SPONSOR: CHAMPAGNE LAURENT-PERRIER

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Chelsea Flower Show 19-23 May

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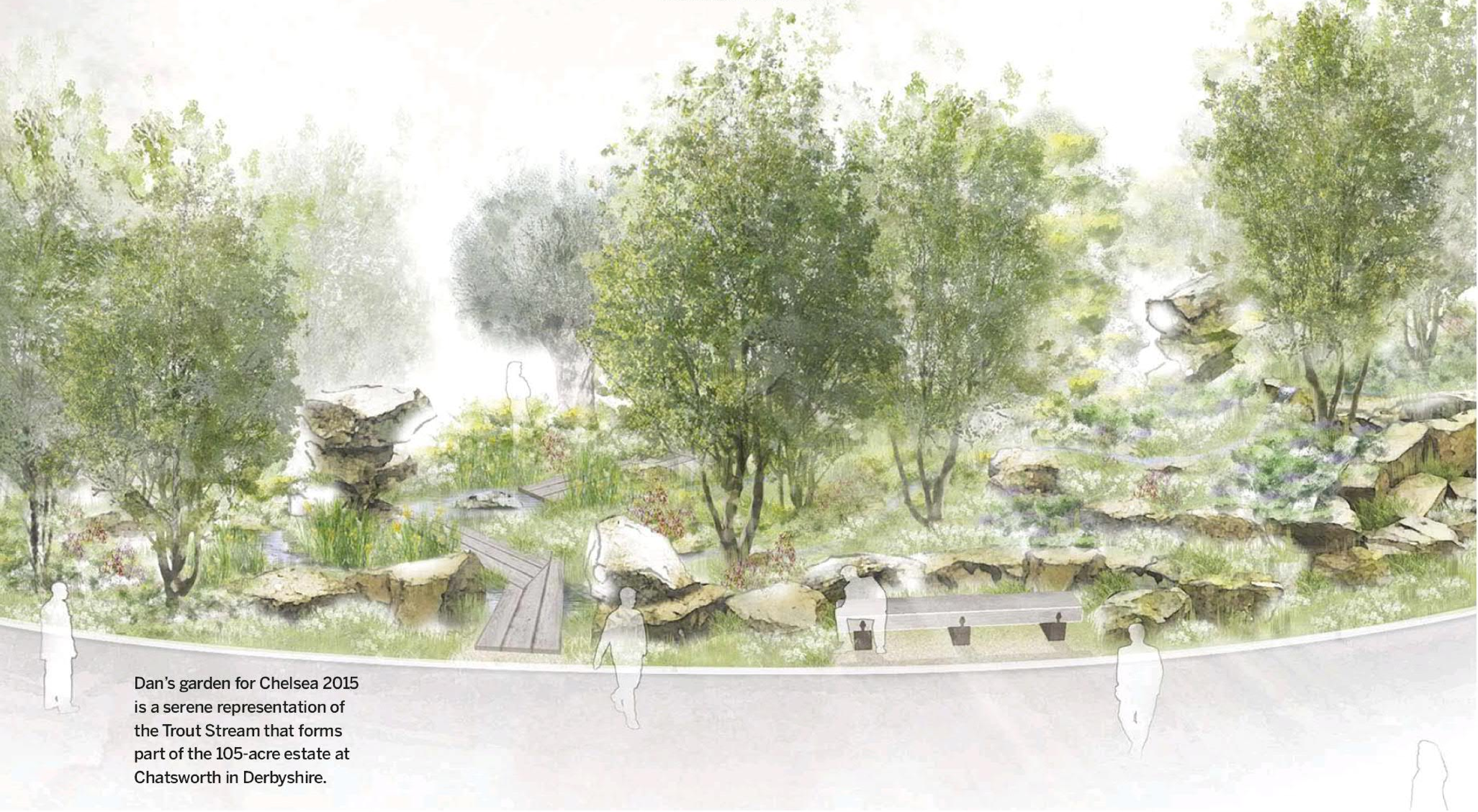
Designer profiles

From stately landscapes to modernist art, we discover what has inspired a selection of the designers vying for Best in Show at Chelsea 2015

WORDS **ANNIE GATTI**



Dan's garden for Chelsea 2015 is a serene representation of the Trout Stream that forms part of the 105-acre estate at Chatsworth in Derbyshire.

Profile

Name Dan Pearson.
Training Wisley Certificate and Kew Diploma.
Chelsea History One gold medal, three silver gilts and one silver.

Dan Pearson

When I was growing up in Hampshire we had a hillside garden, which my parents restored after half a century of neglect. There we found treasures, such as trilliums and chimonanthus, and I first made the connection between wanting to grow plants and create gardens that used plants. Throughout my teens, I also worked every weekend in the garden at Greatham Mill, owned by a brilliant plantswoman and colourist called Frances Pumphrey. It was a good education.

I started to look closely at native planting communities when I was studying in Scotland. I did the same when I visited the Valley of the Flowers in the Himalayas, and in the year I spent working at Jerusalem Botanical Gardens. But, it was in the Picos de Europa in Spain where I realised I wanted to work with plants in this naturalistic way. All these trips were really much more inspiring than any garden.

For me, the design process is about not imposing yourself too strongly. Sense of place is a very important part of what makes our gardens particular and the challenge of the first visit to a site is teasing out the things that are going to give it that identity.

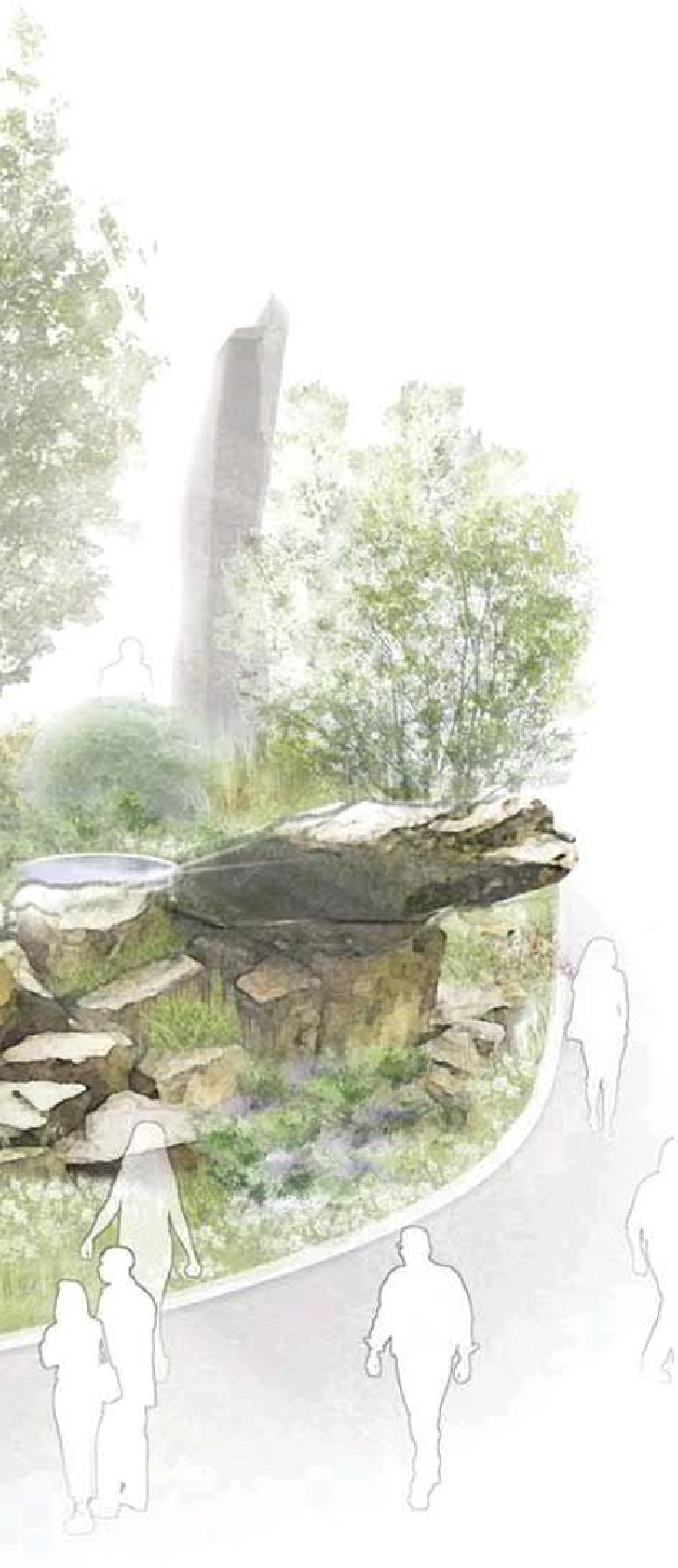
I'd rather use fewer materials than more, probably no more than three or four in any one space. In that way you keep things feeling quieter.

As long as you make sure you've sorted out the maintenance before you start, it's a tremendous luxury to work in the public arena.

Dan's essential design elements

1 Colour schemes
At Torrecchia, a 15-acre garden in southern Italy, Dan chose a predominantly white and blue colour scheme for the ornamental planting, to provide a cool counterpoint to the summer heat.

2 Natural planting style
Plantings of *Gunnera manicata* and *Matteuccia struthiopteris* on the upper level of this ravine, with arum lilies and *Iris japonica* below, creates the sense of a garden lost to nature.



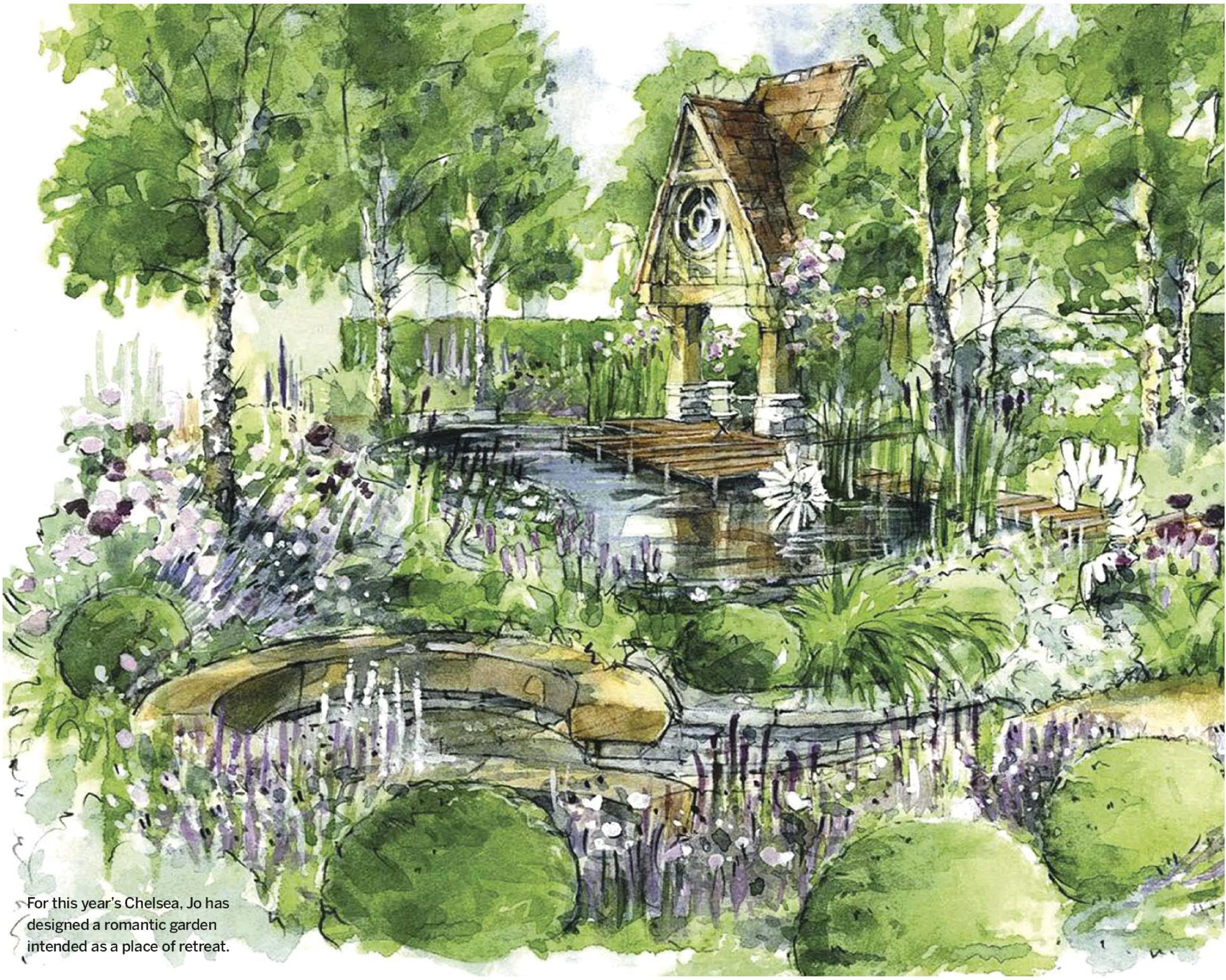
3 Rustic influences
The design for this pool is borrowed from vernacular livestock troughs. Self-seeding annuals such as opium poppies, white clary sage, nigella and valerian add to the relaxed atmosphere.

4 Celebrating the seasons
For the Maggie's Centre, at London's Charing Cross Hospital, Dan planted a woodland scheme in front of the building to help screen the adjacent busy road and connect visitors to the seasons.

Plot TR1.
Sponsor Laurent-Perrier.
Contractor Crocus.
Theme An intimate part of the monumental landscape at Chatsworth, reimagined for Chelsea.

2015 Chelsea garden (pictured above, left)

The Trout Stream at Chatsworth House in Derbyshire is the main inspiration for Dan's return to Chelsea after 11 years. Dan has embraced the challenges of the Triangle site to allow visitors to walk with the stream as it winds through the garden. Sandstone boulders from the Chatsworth estate form a backdrop to the north and provide the elevation for the source pool from which water tumbles down a rocky cascade, shaded by field maples, to feed the stream below. This flows past a sunny glade, where an oak boardwalk and sandstone stepping stones allow passage through the garden past pollarded willows to a boggy opening where it culminates in a still, reflective pool fringed with giant *Osmunda regalis*, *Iris* x *robusta* 'Dark Aura', sedges and bulrushes. Here an oak sculpture represents the veteran oaks at Chatsworth, while an apron of seedling oaks suggests the successive generations that have looked after this historic landscape. Flowering shrubs, such as *Enkianthus campanulatus* and *Hydrangea aspera* 'Macrophylla' create a counterpoint to the mature trees while the open areas of wild-flower turf are punctuated with bulbs such as camassia and native bluebells. Plantings of primulas and *Iris* 'Gerard Darby' create a ribbon of jewel colours along the stream, while it is hoped that a grouping of laburnums, unusual for a Show Garden, will provide splashes of clean yellow against the greens of the woodland planting.
Contact 020 7928 3800, danpearsonstudio.com



For this year's Chelsea, Jo has designed a romantic garden intended as a place of retreat.

Profile

Name Jo Thompson.
Training Diploma in Garden Design, English Gardening School.
Chelsea History Two gold medals, two silver gilts, one silver.

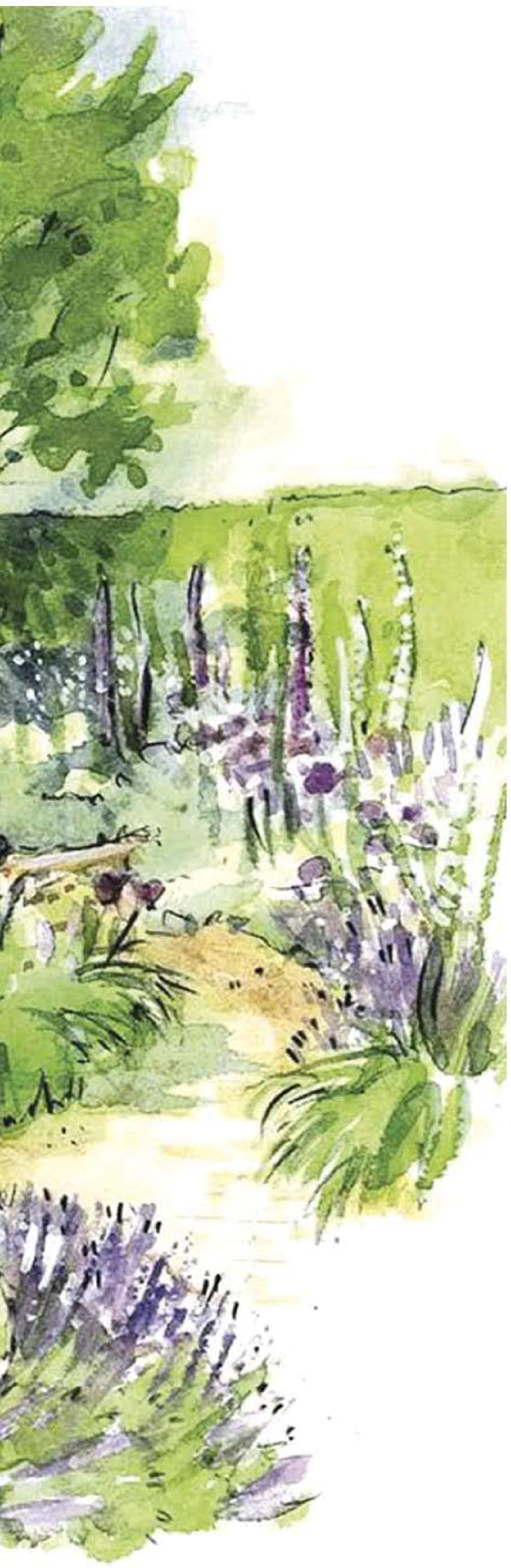
Jo Thompson

I've always loved architecture. Even as a child on holidays in Italy I'd drag the rest of the family to see Hadrian's Villa or the Villa d'Este. I loved the spaces, how everything worked. There was a palazzo in Rome that fascinated me. It had a perspective walkway, designed by Borromini, that was about 8m long and looked more than 30m.

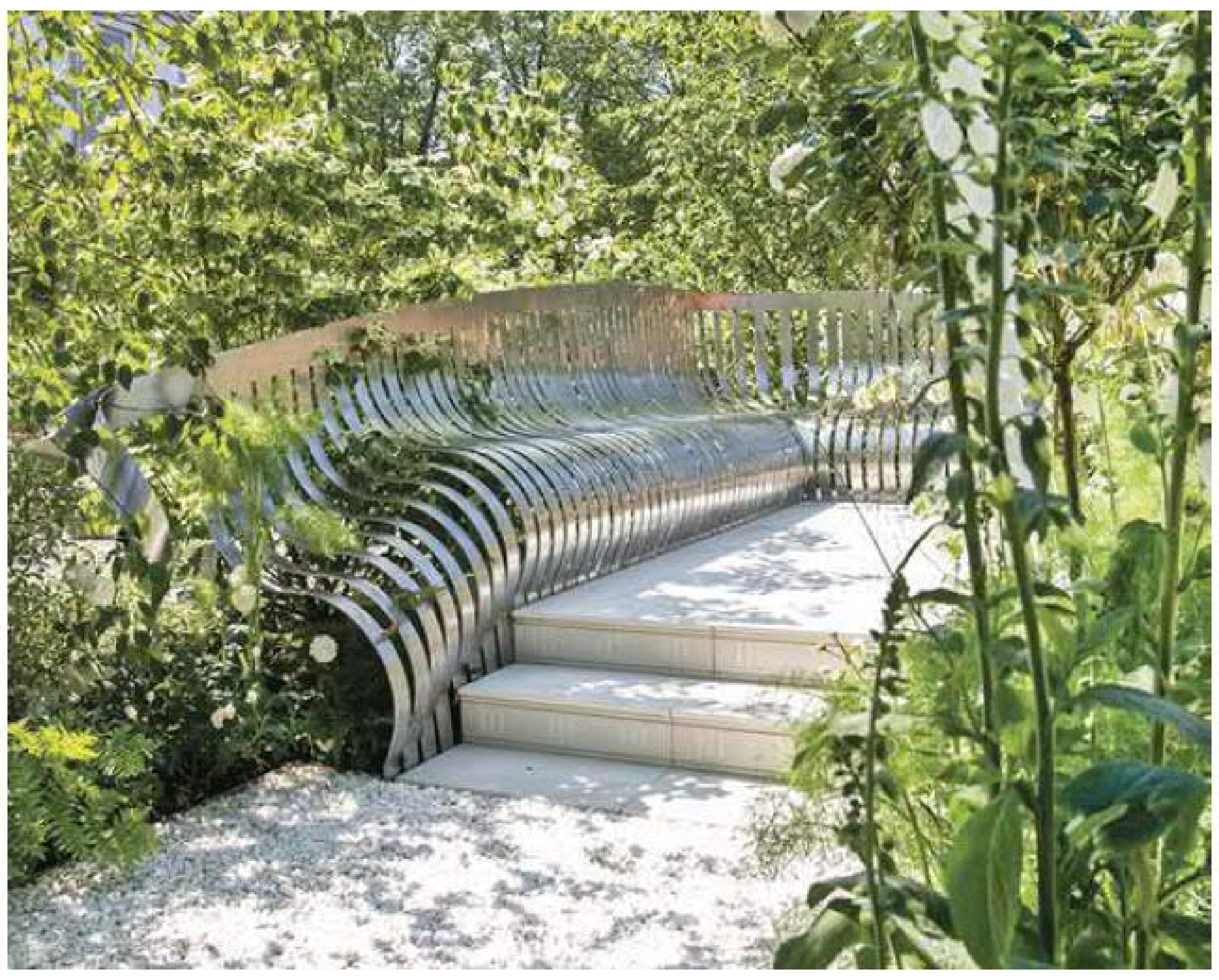
I was a drama teacher before moving into garden design and I loved the stagecraft of putting on productions, and how you can manipulate space. My interest in garden design was primed when we lived opposite Clifton Nurseries in London and had a flat roof. Clifton helped me make a roof terrace and that began the collaborative process I use now in all my designs.

I'm lucky enough to live near Sissinghurst and Great Dixter and have spent a lot of time in both. Their strong frameworks combined with rambling planting has definitely had an influence on what I do. The design for this year's Chelsea garden is incredibly simple: it has an organic shape in the middle and a couple of winding paths crossing it.

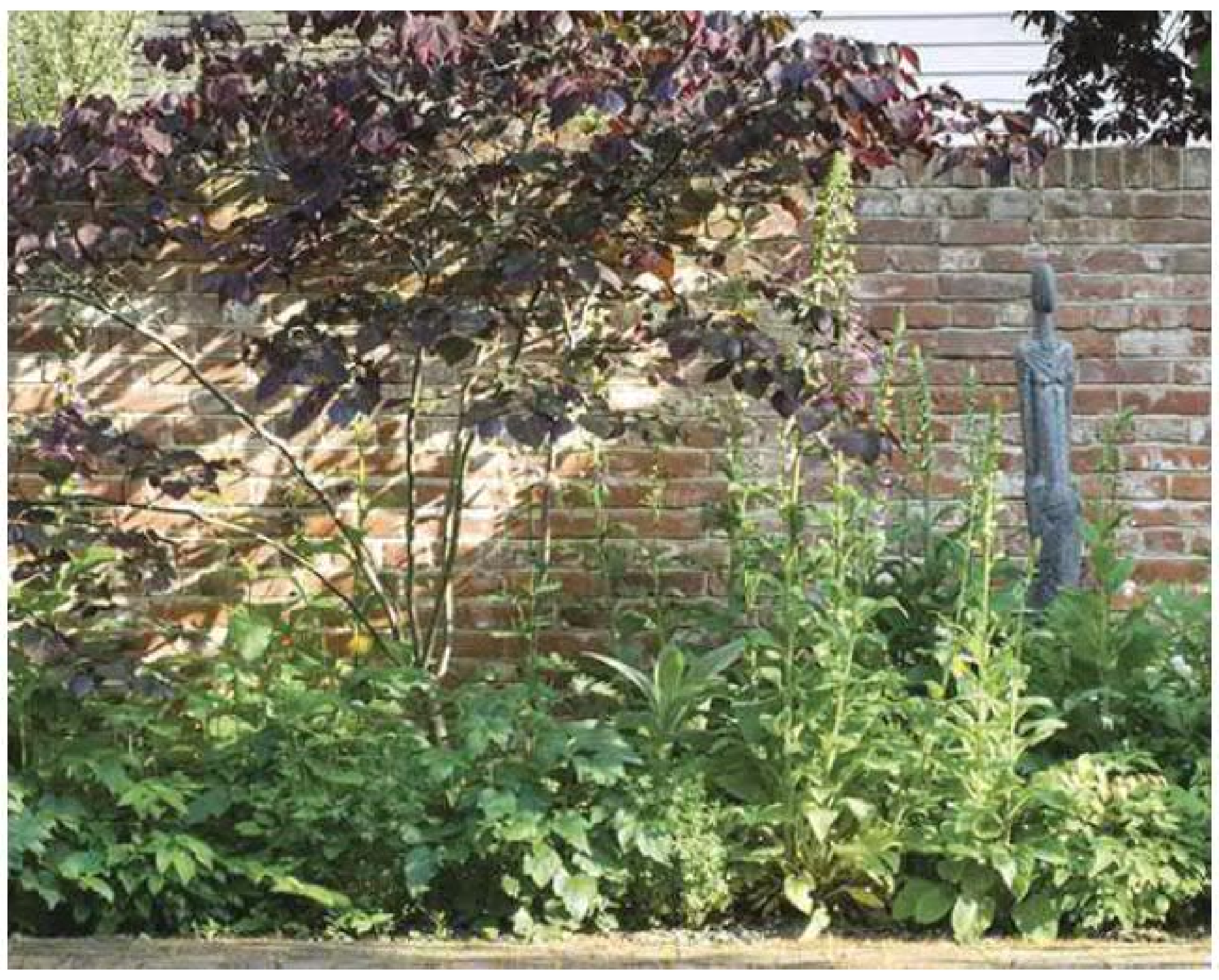
My own garden in Kent, which I've recently moved to, is a blank canvas. I've just had time to reconfigure it and create a pergola so that I can plant all the climbing roses I want. The plan is eventually to cram it with flowers, leaving enough room for the children to kick a football. I use clipped shapes sparingly – an over-manicured space doesn't feel alive to me.



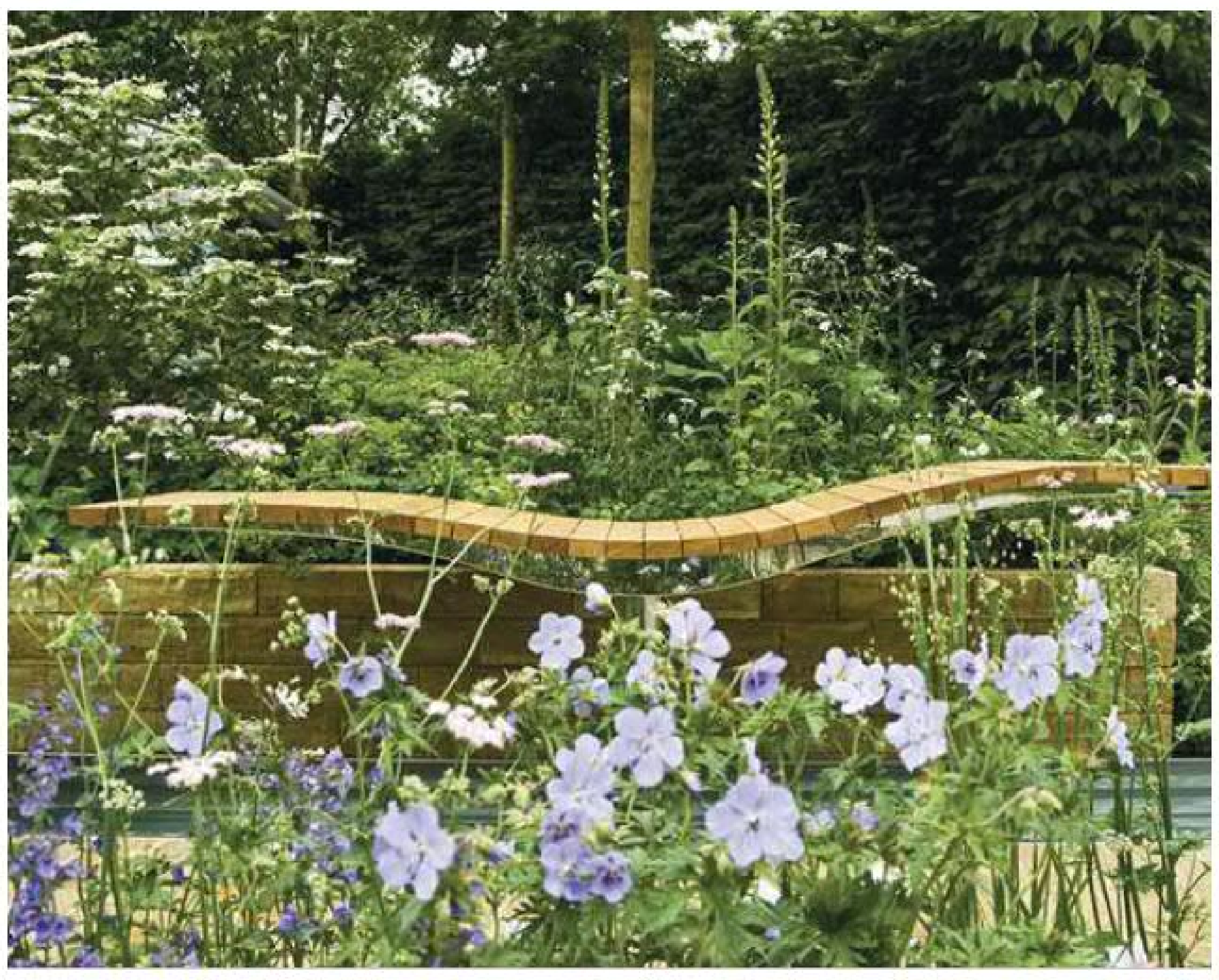
Jo's essential design elements



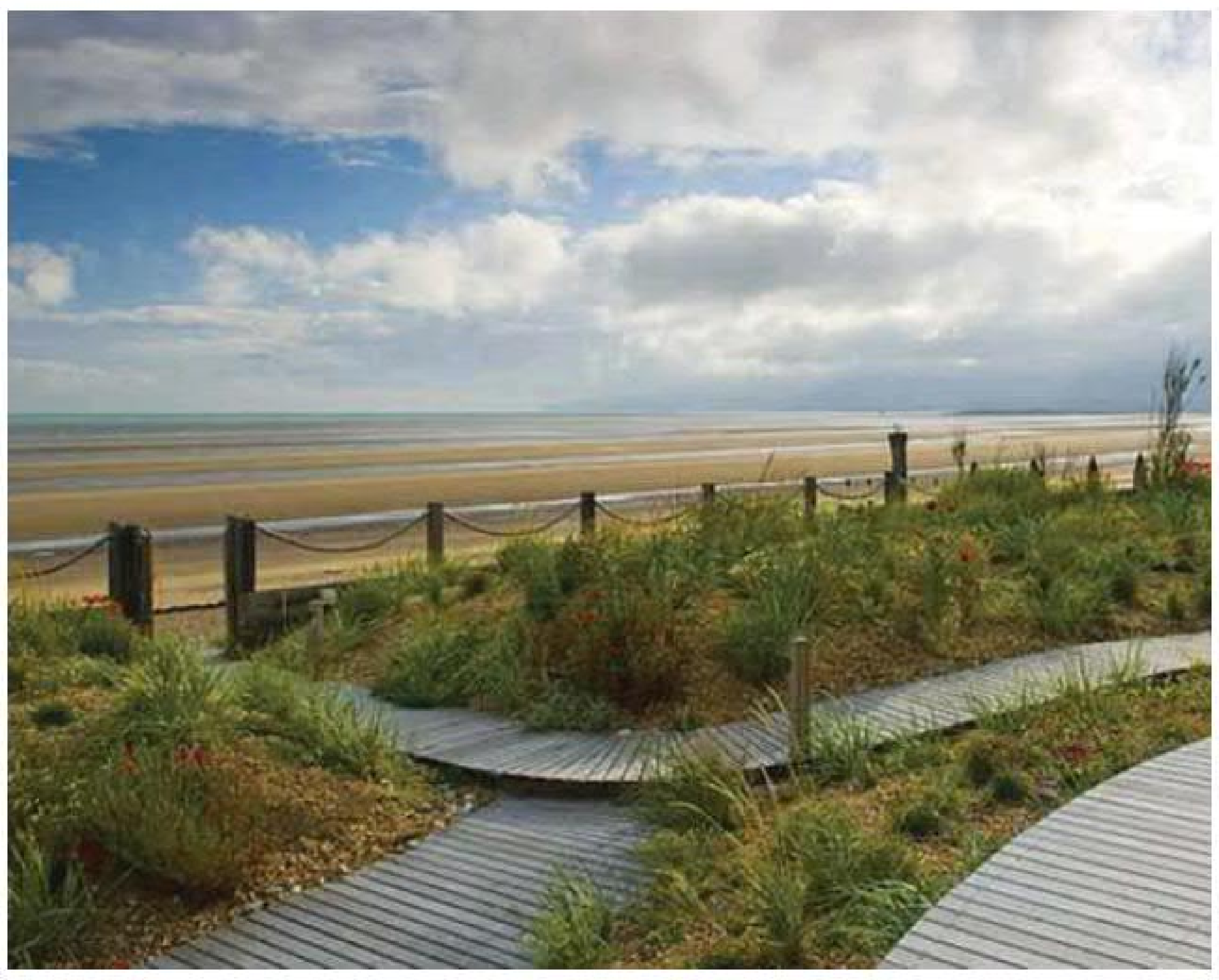
1 Contemporary materials
For her 2014 Fresh Garden, Jo designed a cantilevered steel bench and used cream porcelain tiles to create an elegant space, screened by multi-stem *Betula utilis* var. *jacquemontii*.



2 Sympathetic hard landscaping
For the boundary wall of a Sussex garden, Jo used reclaimed bricks that matched the building. The harmonious planting includes a *Cercis* 'Forest Pansy', foxgloves and dicentras.



3 Painterly planting style
Jo's love of soft, painterly planting schemes was captured in her 2012 Chelsea Show Garden, a restful mix of whites, blues and pinks. The fresh foliage surrounds a curved bench.

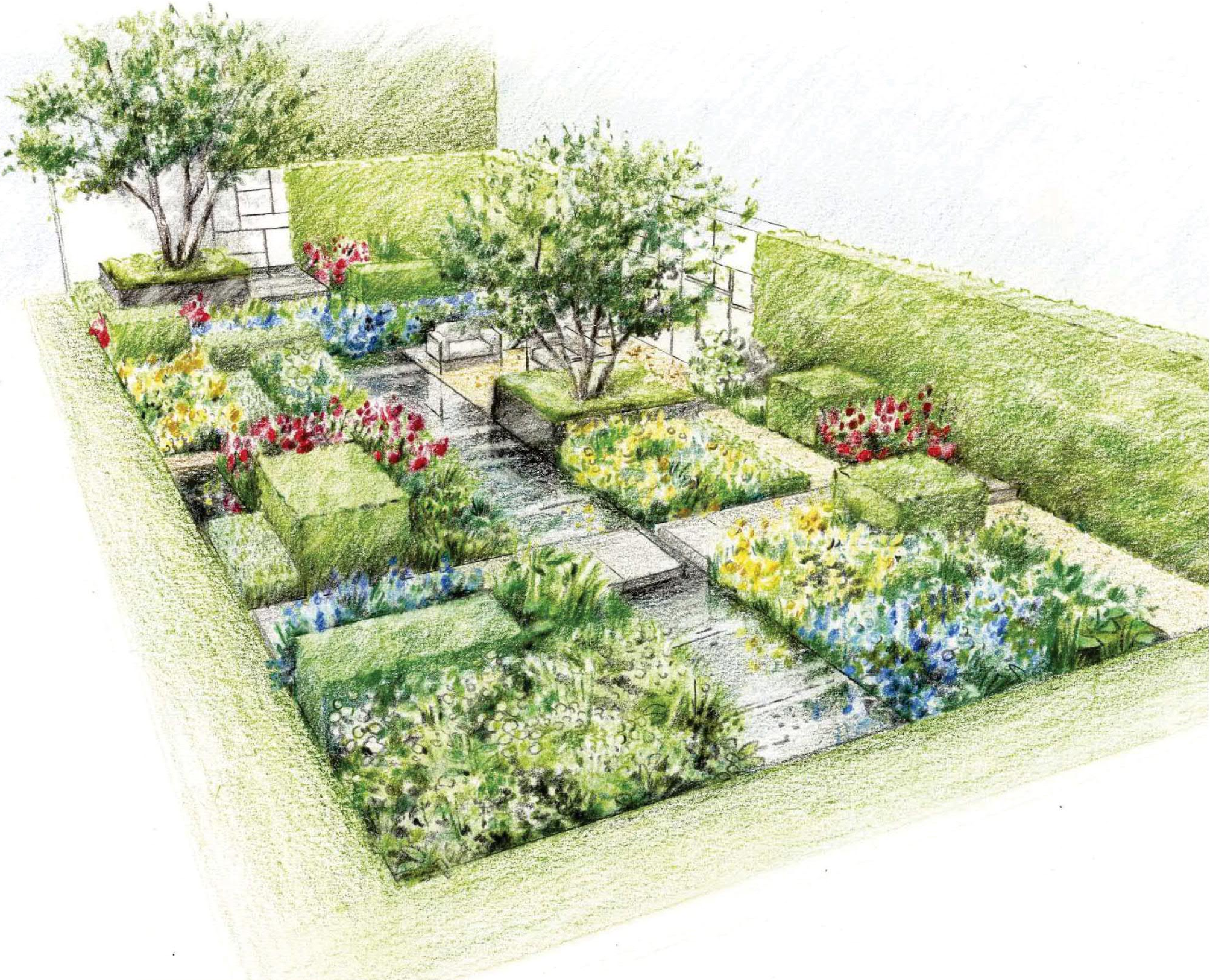


4 A strong sense of place
This award-winning coastal garden in Sussex borrows maritime elements such as the timber boardwalk, oak groyne posts and rope fencing to accentuate its distinctive atmosphere.

Plot MA15.
Sponsor M&G.
Contractor SH Landscapes.
Theme The garden as a quintessentially English refuge, with writer's den, natural swimming pool and romantic planting.

2015 Chelsea garden (pictured above, left)

The idea behind this design was the garden as a retreat, in particular as a place where a writer could work, sheltered by a grove of *Betula nigra* and robinia and looking out across a large, clear pool, enveloped with cottage garden-style planting. The height of the two-storey oak building, which stands on oak pillars resting on stone plinths, is balanced by the 12m-long expanse of water and the vertical forms of the mature woodland trees. Movement through the garden is via two simple hoggin paths that lead on to either side of the oak deck. The open ground floor of the building allows views through to the woodland planting at the back. On the sunny side of the garden the path widens to form a seating area anchored by soft domes of *Buxus sempervirens* and Purbeck stone boulders placed in a relaxed semi circle. The pool has been conceived as a natural swimming pond, filtered by a variety of water plants in the regeneration zone to the side of the den. Pond edge plants include velvety *Iris* 'Black Gamecock', while the sunny front of the garden is a romantic mix of roses including 'Comte de Chambord' (='Madame Boll') and 'Reine des Violettes' as well as perennials, such as astrantias, irises, geraniums and salvias, and a sprinkling of annuals, in shades of white, burgundy, apricot and pink with accents of lavender blue. Shrubs and ferns create the underlayer in the woodland planting against a backdrop of field maple hedging.
Contact 01580 201179, jothompson-garden-design.co.uk



Profile

Name Marcus Barnett.
Training Diploma in Garden Design, Inchbald.
Chelsea History Two gold medals, one silver gilt, one silver.

Marcus Barnett

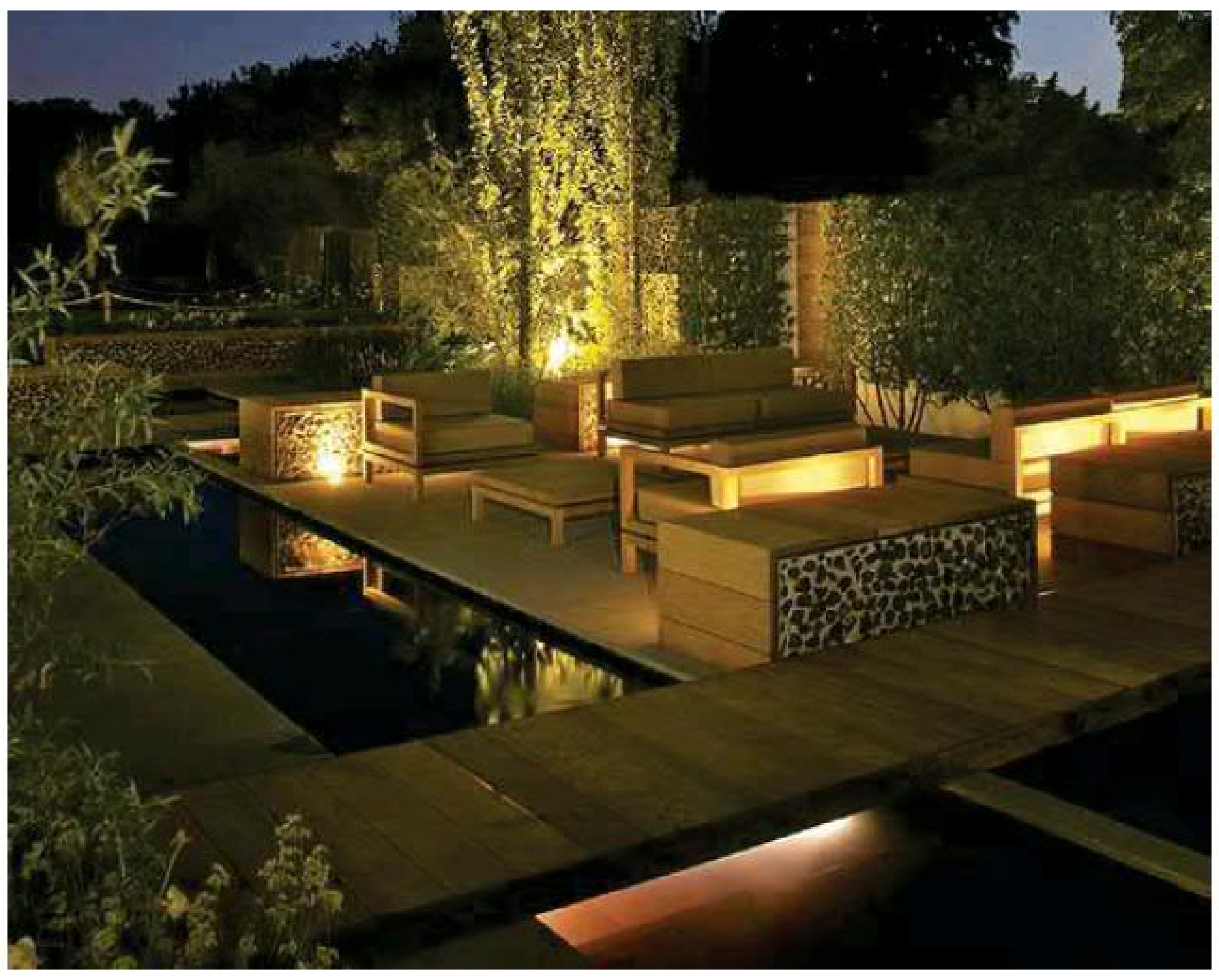
I was always an outdoor person, and although I wasn't particularly interested in plants as a teenager I remembered the plants in my mother's garden, their names, where they were, what colour they were.

I was 33 when I changed career and went to the Inchbald to train. Philip Nixon was a kindred spirit on the course and we collaborated on a design for a small garden that was accepted for Chelsea and then went on to win gold and best in category. We used *Hakonechloa macra*, a plant that I still think is fantastic. We all learned from Piet Oudolf, and later from designers such as Christopher Bradley-Hole, about how to use grasses, how they catch light and wind, and I think they are very much integral to modern planting schemes.

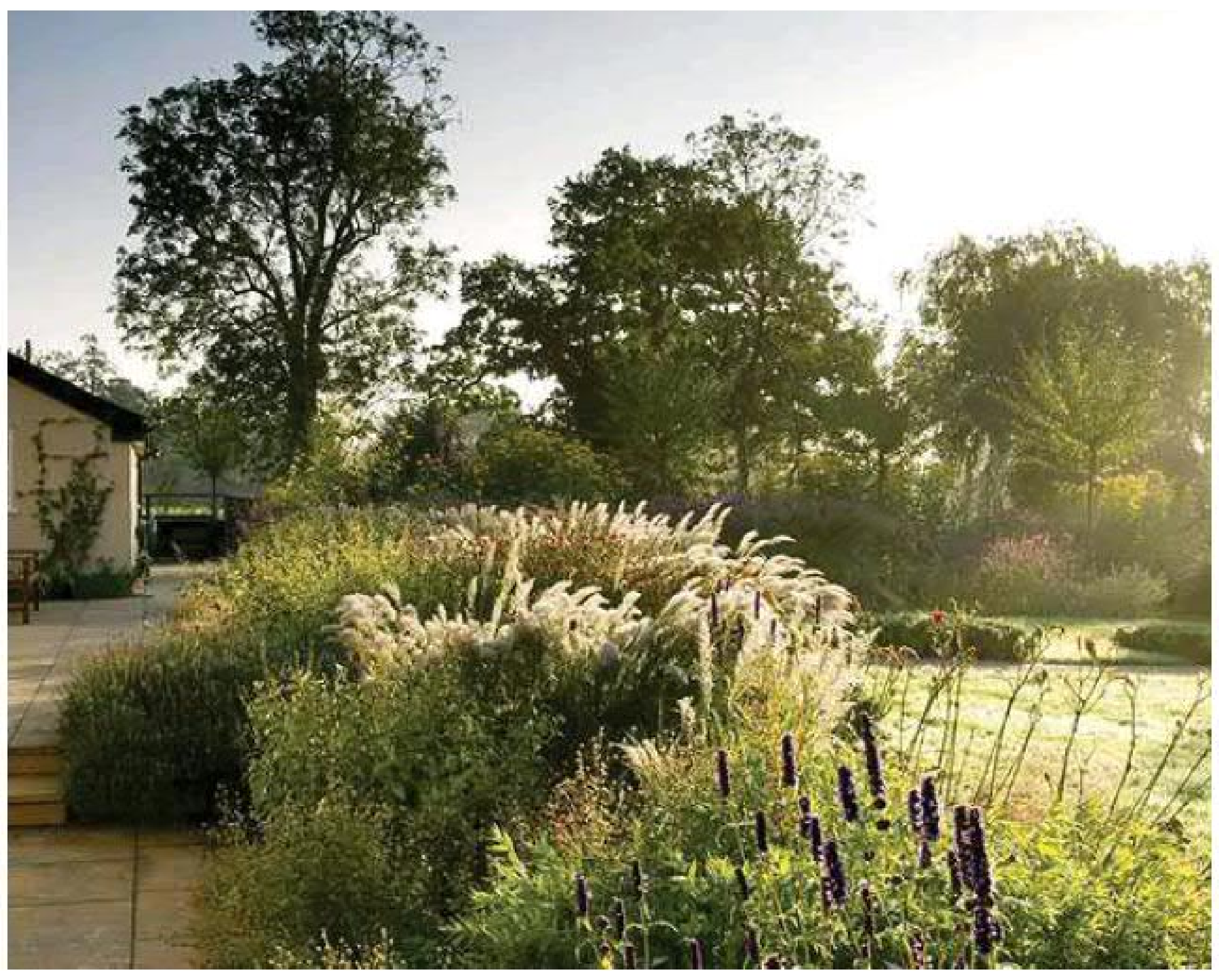
Many of my gardens contain clipped forms. I like them because I like a garden that works in winter. When the garden is in its pomp in summer they lend a rigour to the design and act as a foil to the rest of the planting.

In terms of plants, I like big swathes of generous and statement-esque plants and colourways, but softened and complemented by grasses and foliage. In a large garden I think it's also important to be comfortable with having nothing in various spaces. I'm pretty obsessed with Rousham in Oxfordshire. I love its strength and confidence, the incredible sweeping paths, the huge woods, the intimacy of the walled garden and parterre and the weird little spaces you stumble upon.

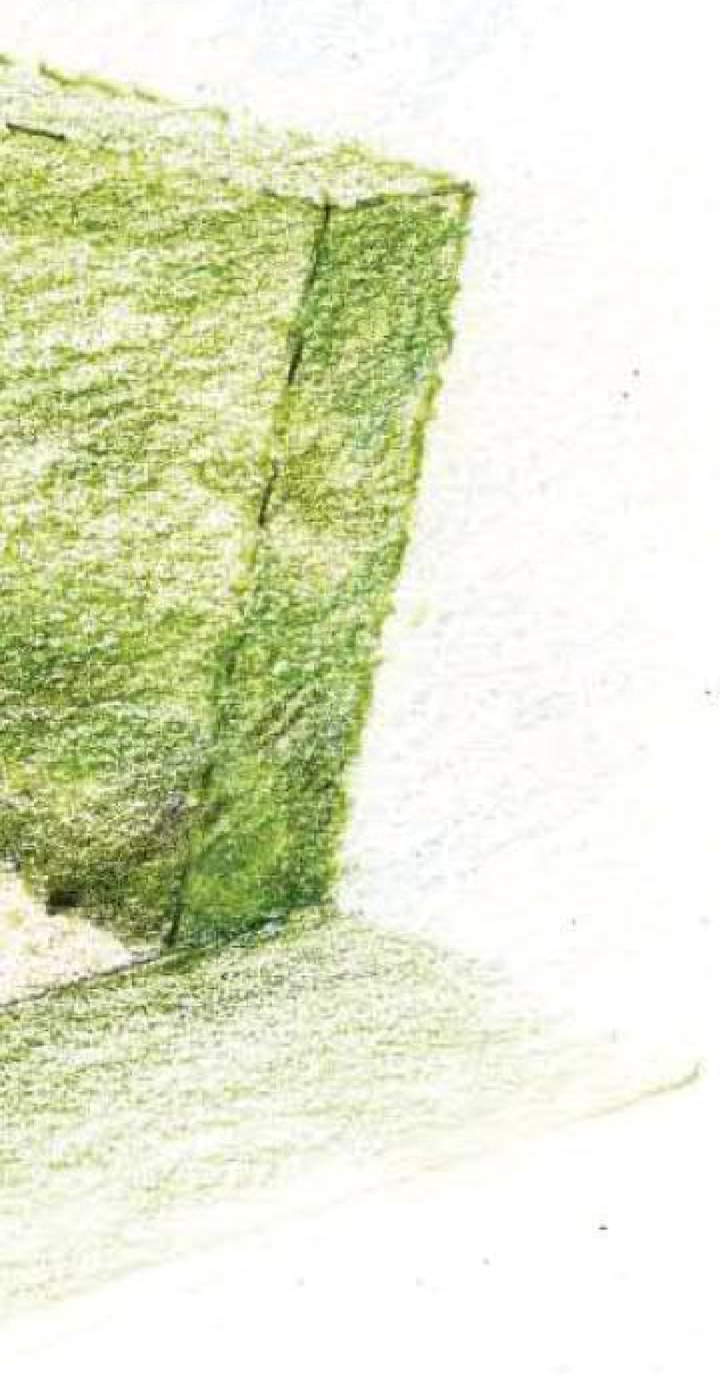
Marcus's essential design elements



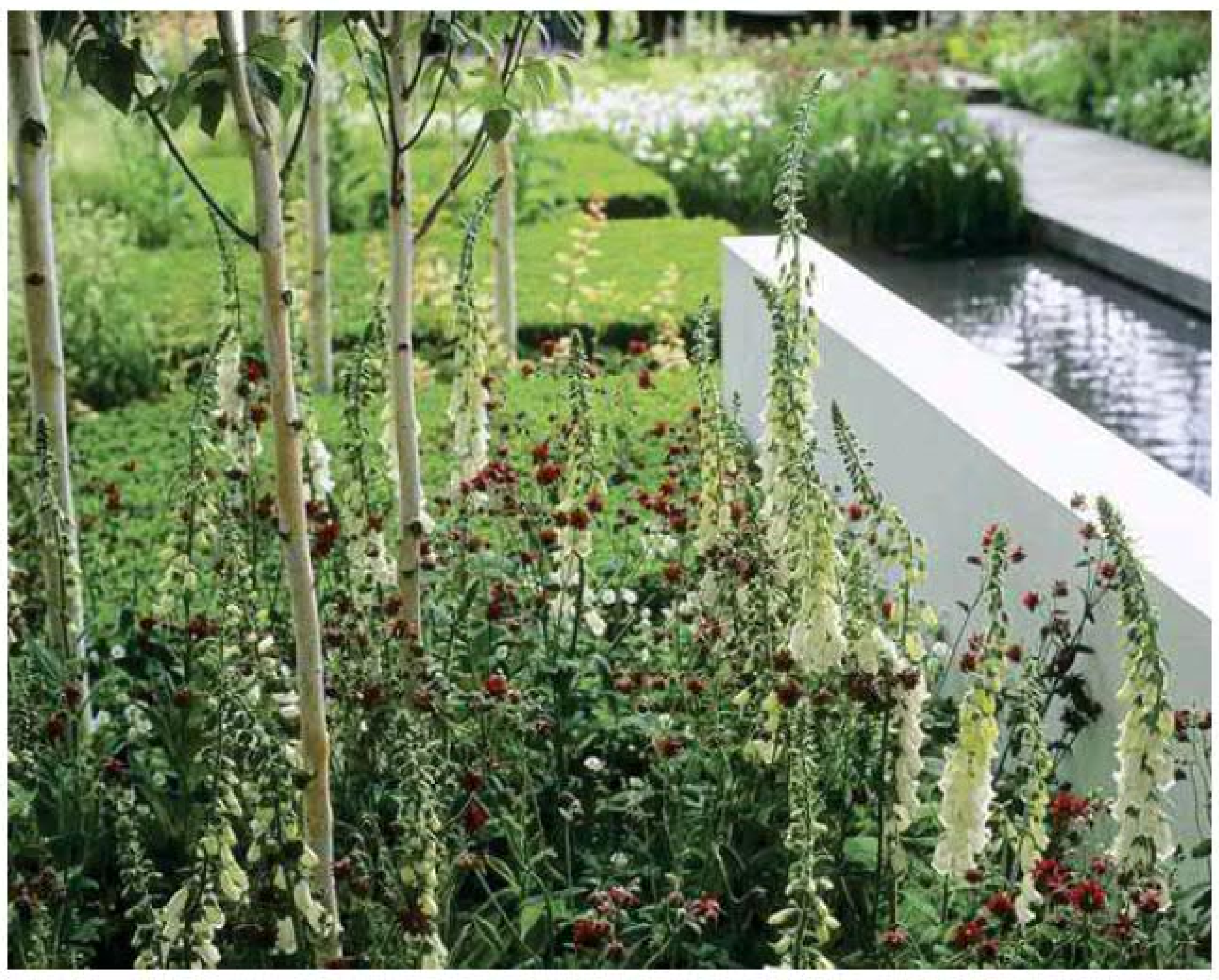
1 Geometric compositions
This contemporary design, made with Philip Nixon for Chelsea 2007, uses crisply finished materials and a long pool to reflect light, especially at night, while black poplars add vertical interest.



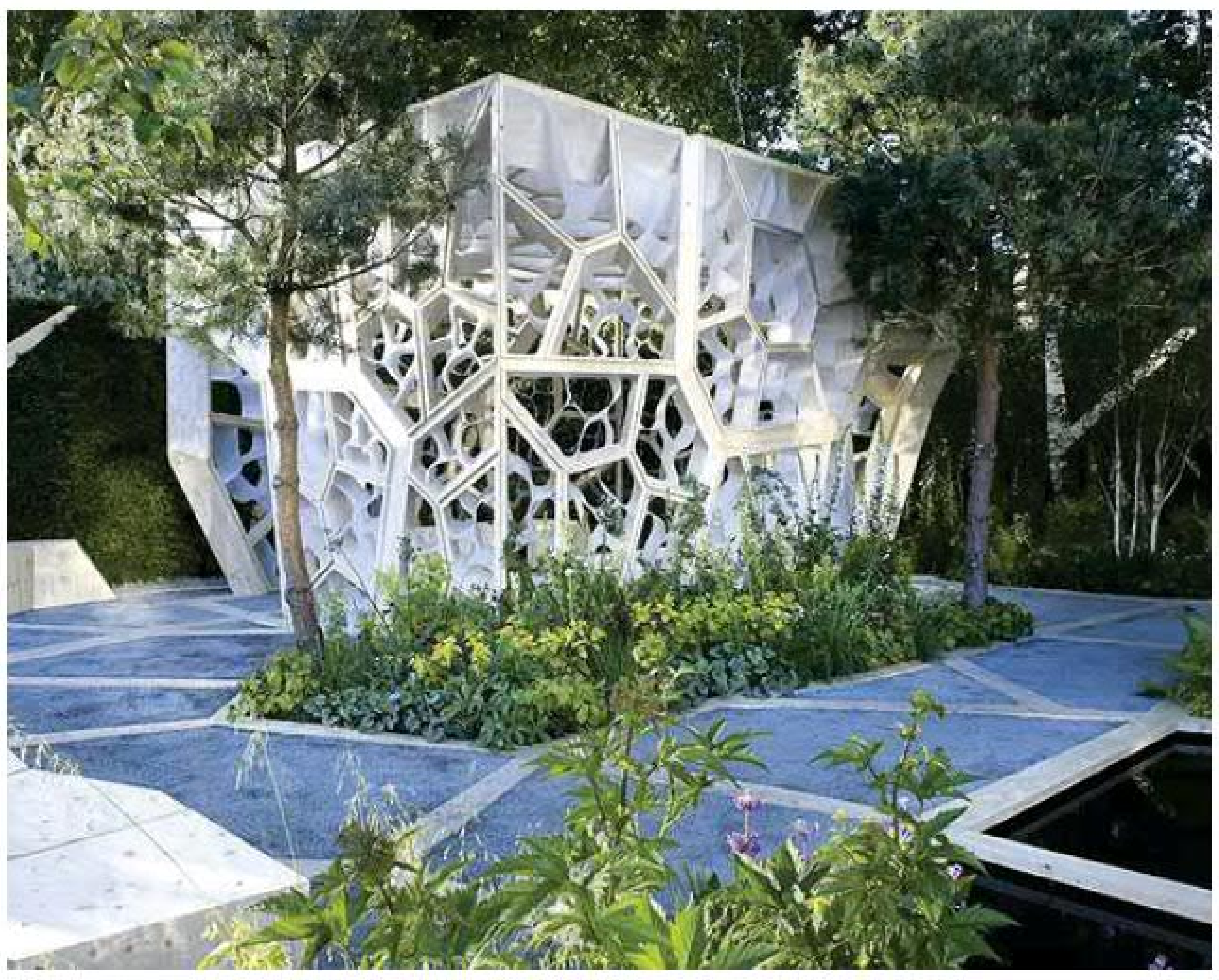
2 Soft planting
In this country garden in Suffolk, York stone terracing is softened by generous plantings of perennials such as *Helianthus* 'Lemon Queen', Agastache 'Blackadder' and the grass *Stipa brachytricha*.



Marcus drew inspiration from the straight lines and primary colours of the De Stijl Movement for his 2015 Chelsea garden.



3 Modernist influences
The strong lines of modernist architecture underpin the 2006 Chelsea Show Garden by Marcus and Phillip Nixon. Structural blocks of box are softened by plantings of *Digitalis purpurea* f. *albiflora* and *Aquilegia vulgaris* var. *stellata* 'Ruby Port'.



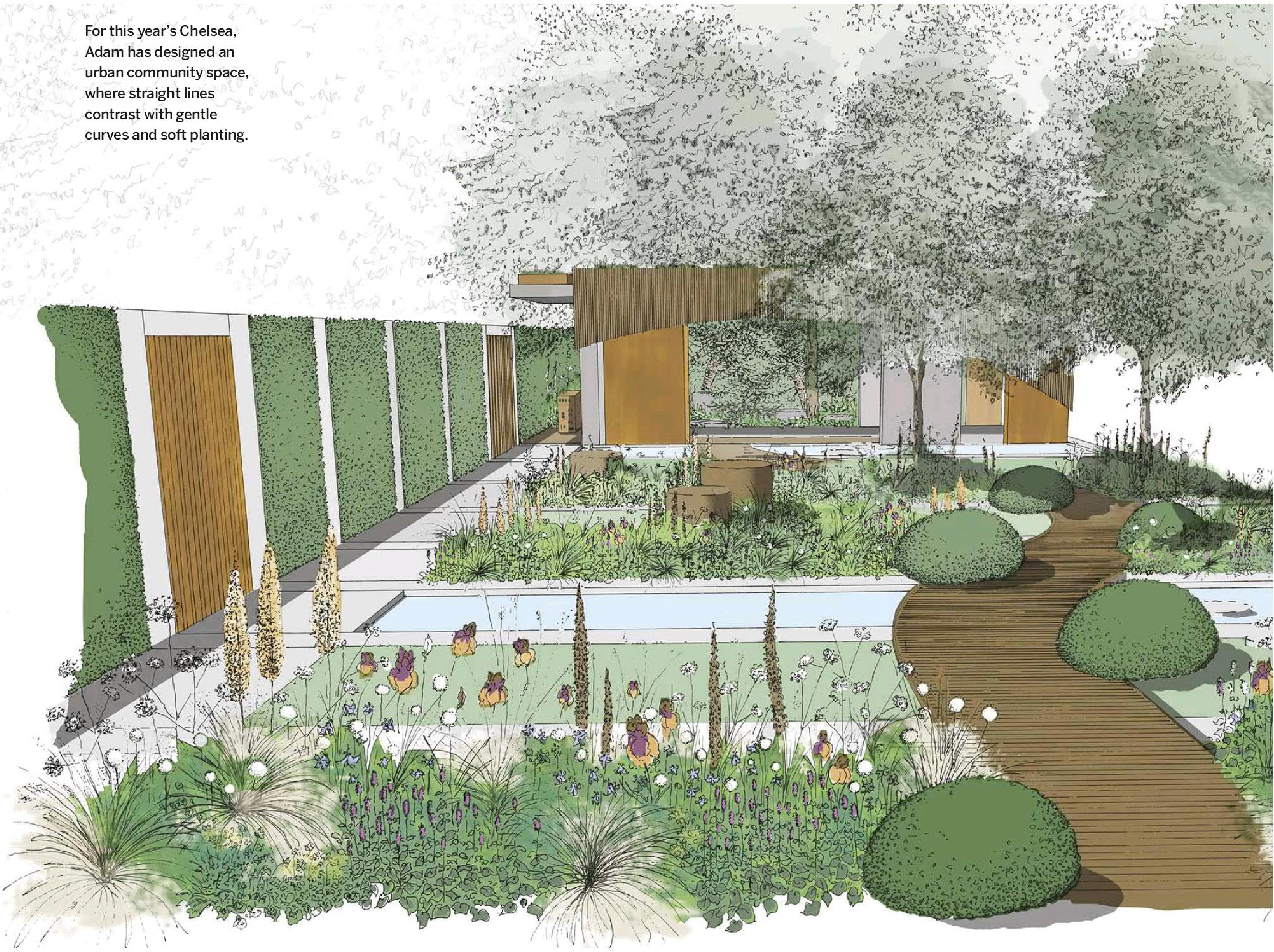
4 Sculptural elements
Marcus's 2011 Chelsea Show Garden for *The Times* was inspired by the cellular structure of plants and featured a pavilion constructed of ash and recycled plastic. The pavilion's angular patterns are repeated in the hard landscaping.

Plot MA19.
Sponsor *The Telegraph.*
Contractor Crocus.
Theme A garden of different levels and routes, held in a geometric framework of colour-themed planting.

2015 Chelsea garden (pictured above, left)

This garden, built on a series of geometric shapes and blocks of colour in varying heights, is designed to be enjoyed as an immersive experience but also to be looked down on from the building to which it belongs. Inspired by childhood memories of running through fields and woods, and by the linear abstractions and vibrant colours of the De Stijl Movement, Marcus has designed a garden with a series of routes and stopping places through colour-themed planting and along rectilinear pools to a sunken seating area, part-shaded by an *Osmanthus* x *burkwoodii* tree. The water flows from a wall-top pool, only visible from an upstairs window, down a concrete wall to an upper pool, along a rill and into a still pool that extends the length of the garden. Two basalt paths cross the water at either end of the garden and link with the gravel paths and seating area. Here an expanse of contrasting concrete wall – one section smooth, the other a mosaic of different-sized pieces with different reliefs and depths – creates a modernist backdrop that is repeated on the back boundary. Dominant colours in the geometric beds are red, yellow, blue, white and green. Each bed is made up of a selection of colour-themed perennials, annuals and bulbs, so the overall effect is a multi-layering of different hues and tones. For the yellow beds, Marcus is hoping to include the rare Itoh Hybrid Peony 'Bartzella', which he describes as a 'belting yellow'.

Contact 020 7736 9761, marcusbarnett.com



For this year's Chelsea, Adam has designed an urban community space, where straight lines contrast with gentle curves and soft planting.

Profile

Name Adam Frost.
Training City & Guilds qualifications in Horticulture and in Design.
Chelsea History Six gold medals and a silver.

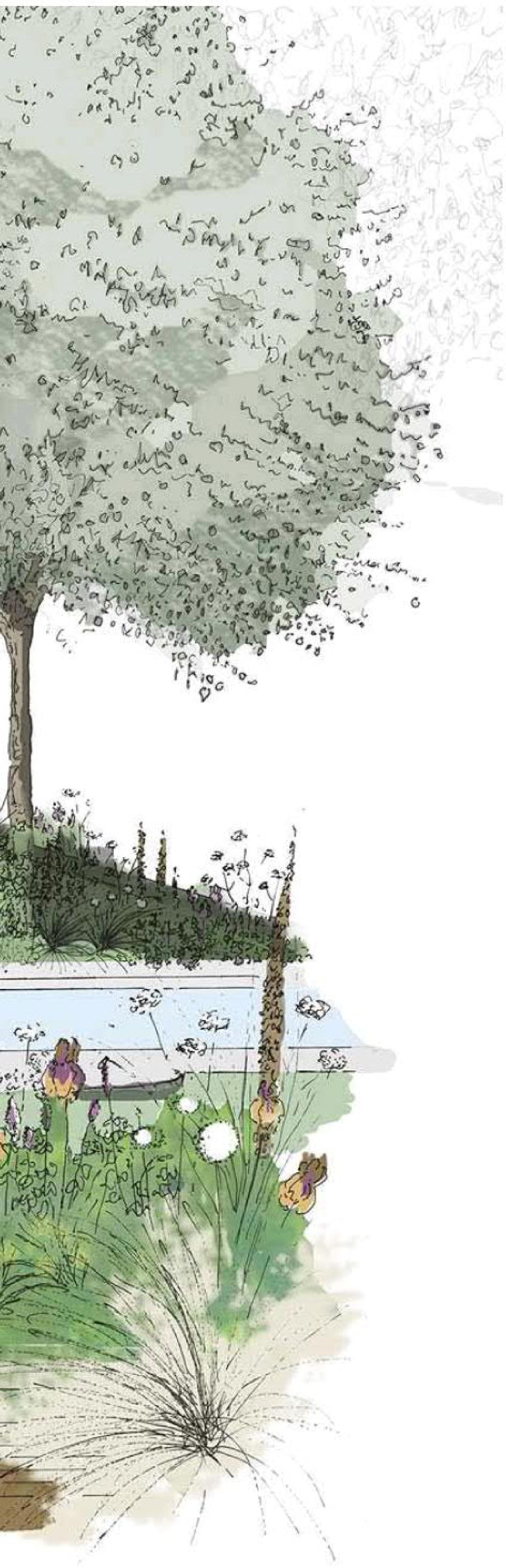
Adam Frost

My journey has been from gardener to landscaper to designer. I started in the Parks Department of Devon County Council, and then went on to work for renowned gardener and *Gardeners' World* presenter Geoff Hamilton at Barnsdale in Rutland. I worked for him for seven years and that experience took me to a completely new level. His passion for plants and gardens, and the way he inspired a nation, I found absolutely amazing. He arranged for me to train under designer David Stevens and I went on to become his associate designer.

As a youngster I loved drawing and being outside. Both sets of my grandparents lived near us. I had a veg plot, with my name painted on a piece of slate, in my tidy Nan's allotment, and in my scruffy Nan's wilderness garden I used to pull frogs and newts out of her Belfast sinks. It scares the life out of me that we're creating a generation that are not connecting with what's going on outside their back door.

I've evolved, and am still evolving, as a designer. Terence Conran gave me the confidence to call myself a designer. When I built his 2005 Chelsea Garden, he told me: "Just remember, I started off as a joiner."

I think everyone should have the opportunity to garden. I love what I've done with Homebase – they helped me set up the Garden Academy, which last year gave 20 newcomers the opportunity to have a 12-month placement in the industry. I've got to the stage now where I want to pass on what I know.



Adam's essential design elements

1 Links to nature
Adam's love of nature is evident in his Chelsea 2014 garden, which featured meadow planting and an arbour with a heather-clad roof. Stone boulders link the different levels.

2 Ornamental kitchen garden
Taking inspiration from the kitchen garden at Barnsdale, this family vegetable garden, laid out in a series of steel-edged raised beds shows that ornamentals can make an attractive addition.

3 Seating areas
Seating areas form an essential element in many of Adam's garden designs. Here square stepping stones lead over water to a natural arbour of woodland planting where curved timber seats provide a shady resting place.

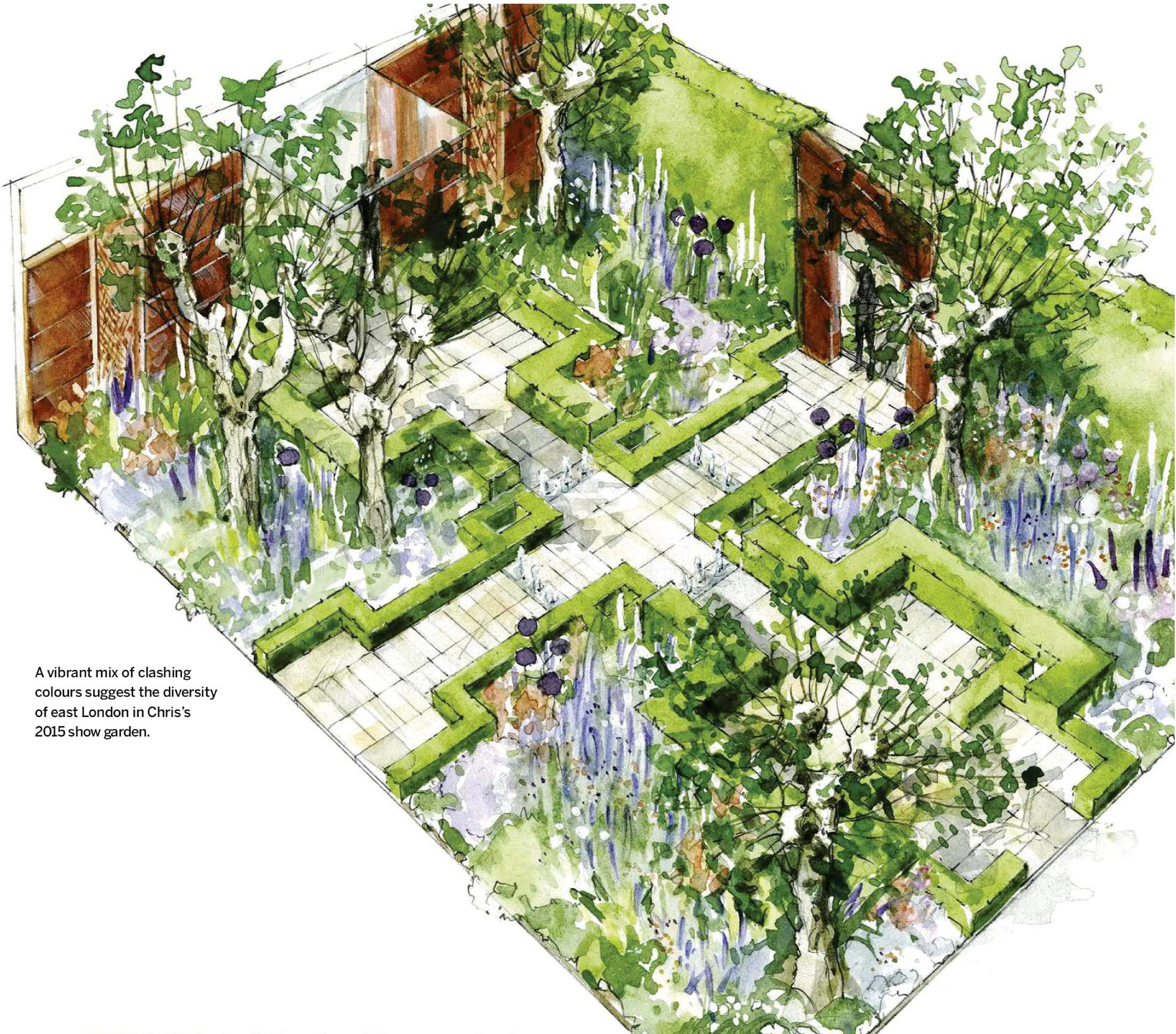
4 Bringing nature to the city
This Chelsea 2008 Urban Garden shows how a small front garden can be an elegant space, featuring a contemporary rill and a sunken seating area embraced by layered planting of mixed perennials, shrubs, herbs and grasses.

Plot MA18.
Sponsor Homebase.
Contractor Bespoke Outdoor Space.
Theme An urban community garden, built with modern materials, that brings nature to the city.

2015 Chelsea garden (pictured above, left)

Adam found inspiration for this urban community garden, which uses concrete, Corten steel and cedar as its principal structural materials, from the Bauhaus Movement. The plan is based on a sequence of rectangles laid across the garden and continuing up the boundary in columns of poured concrete. Three bands of mixed perennials and grasses are interspersed with three strips of lawn and two pools which serve as paddling pools in the summer months. The pools are fed by water walls made from corrugated Corten steel, one of the garden's most unusual features. A cedar board path crosses the pools and leads into a pavilion made from concrete and Corten steel. This is softened by a curved cladding of cedar and a rooftop densely planted with wild flowers – Adam is experimenting with a new mix from Lindum Turf – with a beehive for the community's beekeeper. The back section of the garden offers a shady area where tree ferns create a surprising understorey and children can jump across giant stepping stones. On both sides of the building are katsura trees (*Cercidiphyllum japonicum*) that not only provide a source of nectar for bees but also scent for the garden's users. The rest of the planting, in shades of crimson, rust and orange, dusted with blues, references the materials. Chelsea favourites – aquilegias, astrantias, geraniums, geums, irises and foxgloves – are well represented.

Contact 01780 753404, adamfrost.co.uk



A vibrant mix of clashing colours suggest the diversity of east London in Chris's 2015 show garden.

Chris Beardshaw

RICHARD KENDAL

Profile

Name Chris Beardshaw.
Training Degrees in Horticulture and Landscape Architecture.
Chelsea History Four gold medals, one silver gilt, one bronze; three times People's Choice.

From the age of about eleven I was very clear that all I wanted to do was work with plants. I spent all my spare time working at a small nursery outside Worcester and within a few months of starting there I was designing displays. Later, when I was working for a wholesale nursery, I began to understand that the orchestration of plants has a fundamental effect on people's emotions and that really excited me.

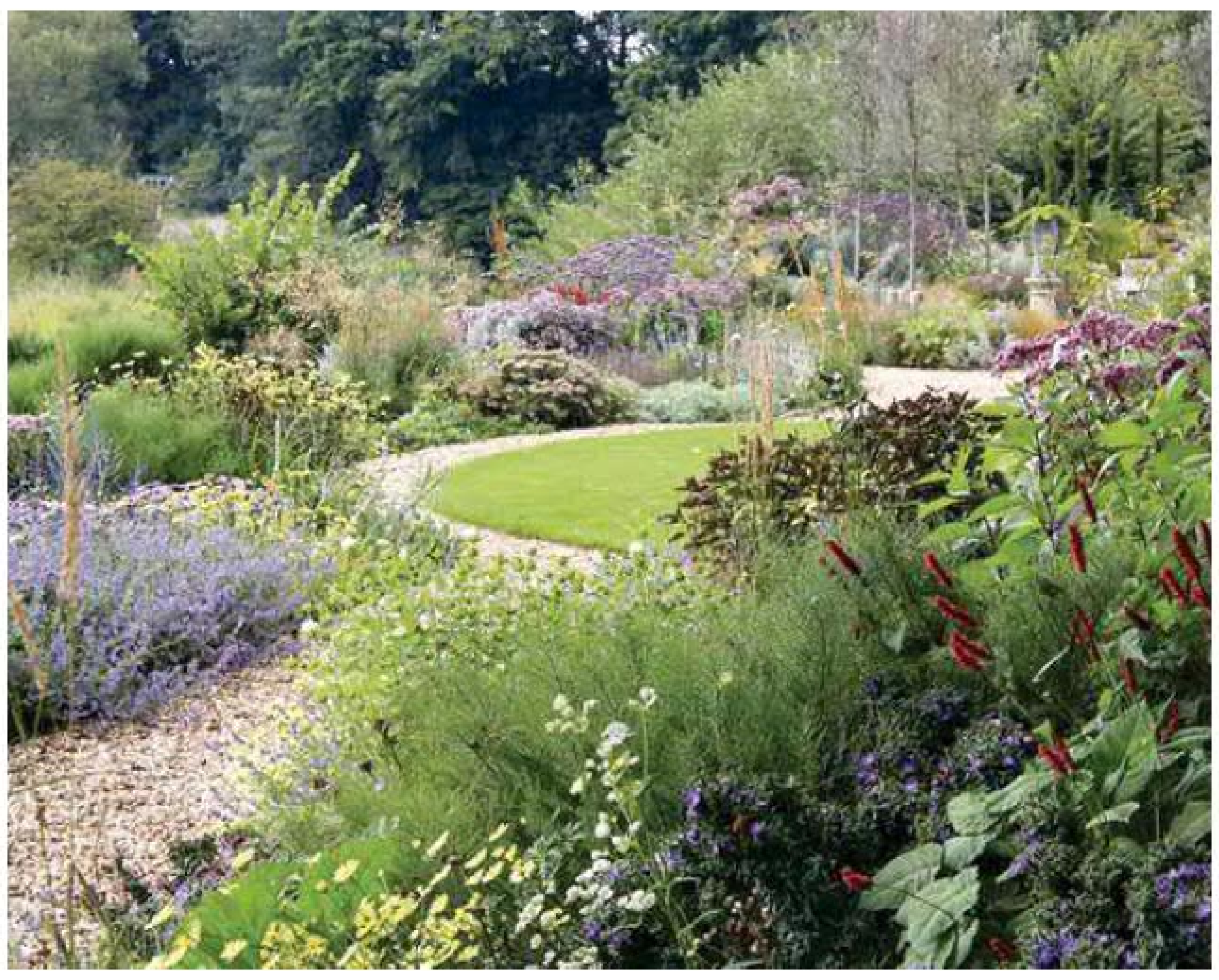
My schemes are always plant rich; it's the plants that produce the structure and framework of my gardens.

In the greatest English gardens the lawn is used as a sorbet between exotic courses and it becomes a narrative that leads you through. Now we often use lawns just to fill a space. I think that's undervaluing a plant group that has so much to offer. You should never discount any group of plants en masse, because there's always a role for them to play in the right place, at the right time.

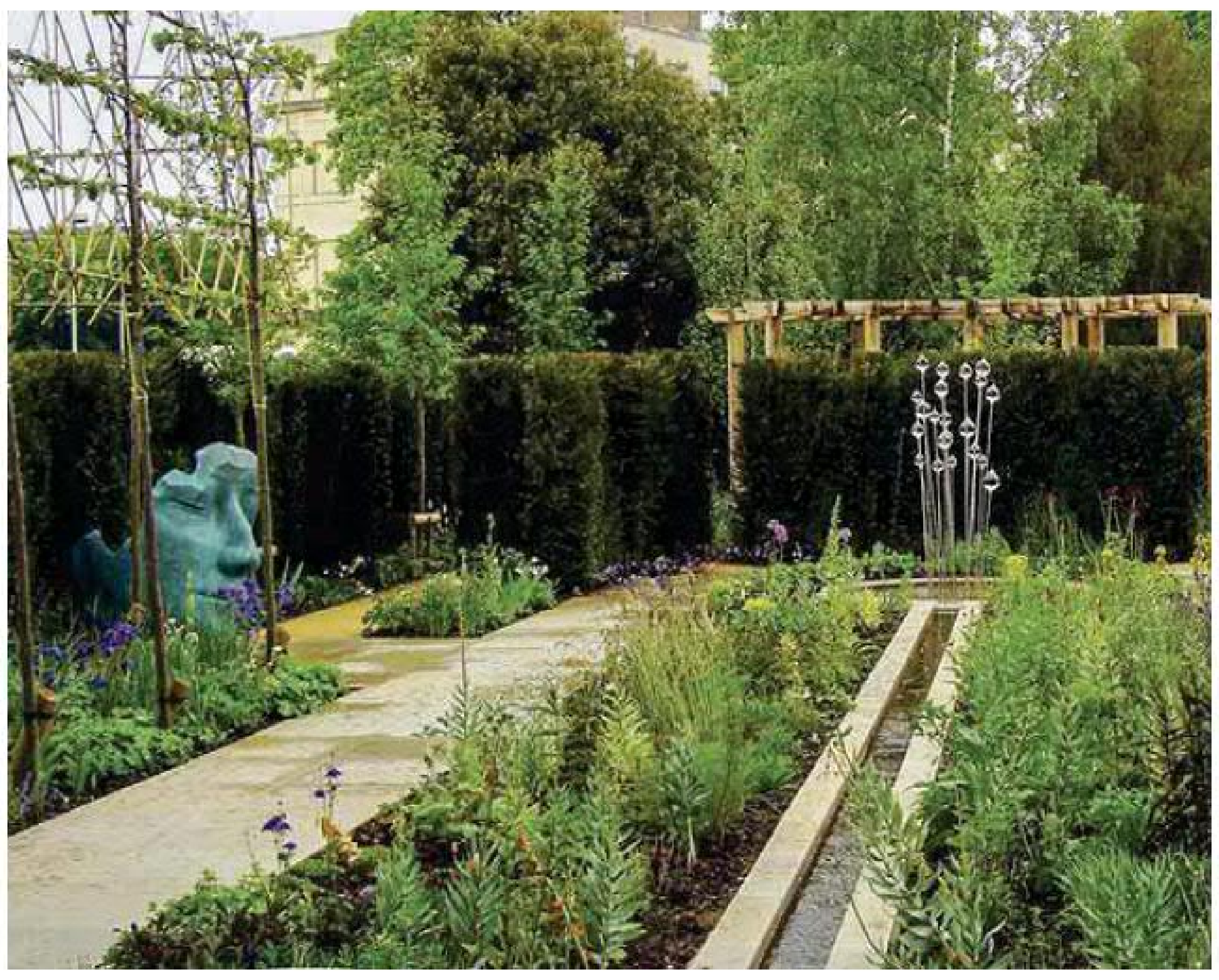
I enjoy using materials where you almost see the fingerprints of the individual who has crafted them. It brings a personal warmth and integrity to a scheme.

We used to visit Kiftsgate and Hidcote regularly when I was a horticultural student. The theatre, the drama, the poise and consideration of all the individual elements in those plant-rich gardens is just a delight and that's what continues to steer me now.

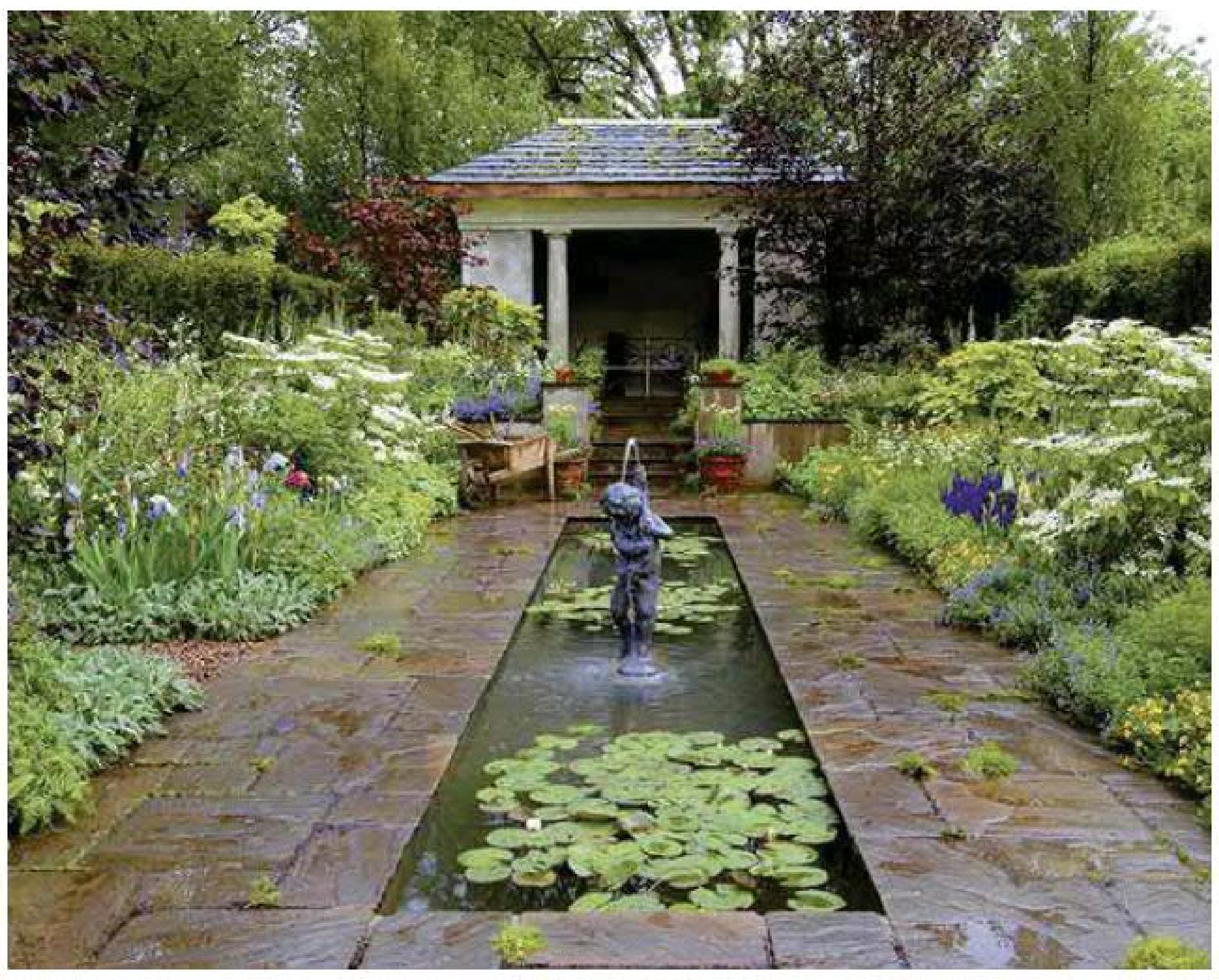
Chris's essential design elements



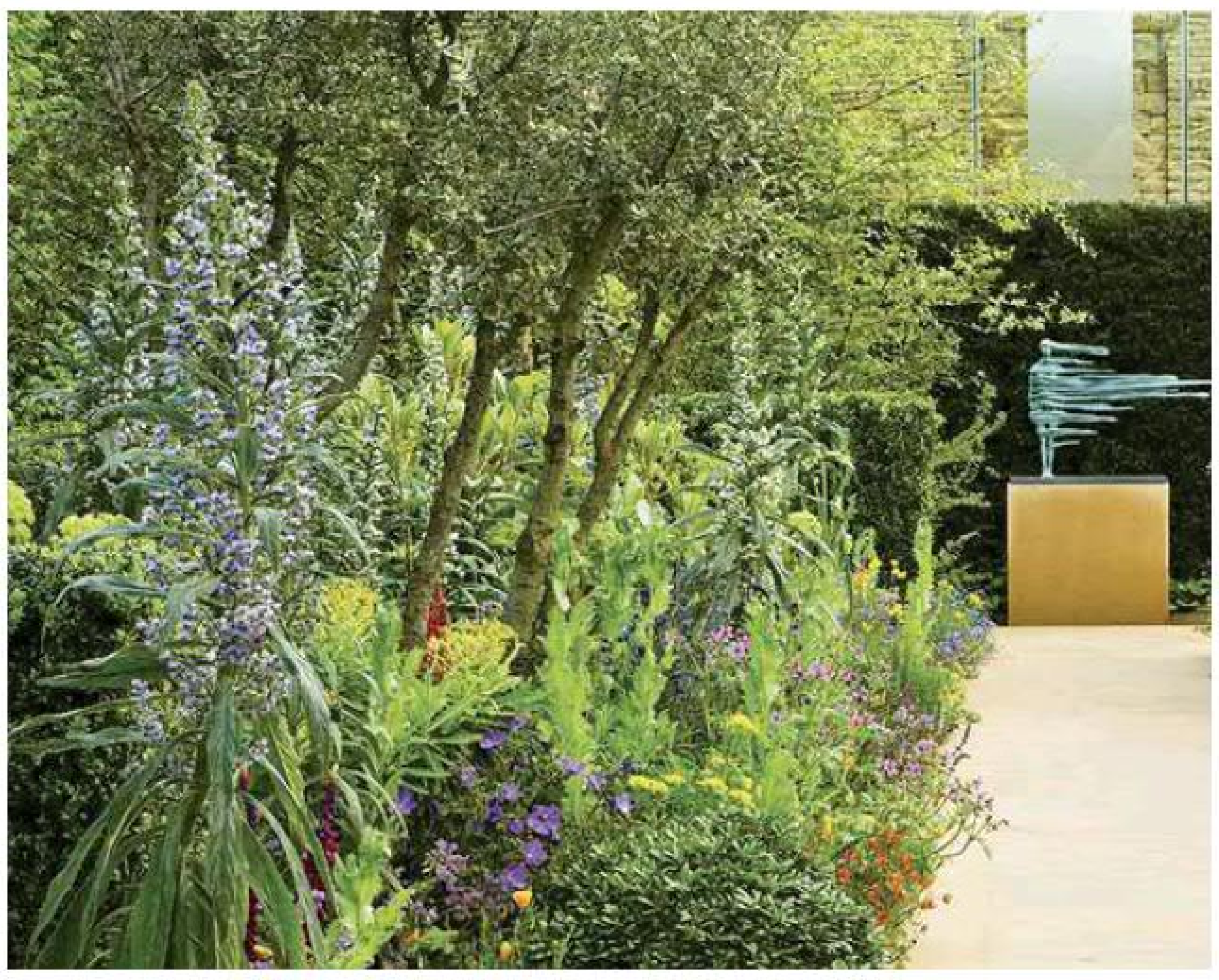
1 Garden rooms
A gravel path connects a series of 'rooms' in this three-acre garden in Dorset. The crisply defined lawn edging contrasts with the billowing effect of the planting in the borders.



2 Clipped hedging
Yew hedging delineates a series of spaces for displaying the client's collection of art in this town garden in Cheltenham. The geometric lines of the rill draws the eye to the glass sculpture.



3 Classical symmetry
In Chris's 2006 Chelsea Show Garden a classical pavilion overlooking a rectilinear lily pond makes an impressive focal point. The layered borders are a mixture of shrubs and perennials, shot through with bulbs.



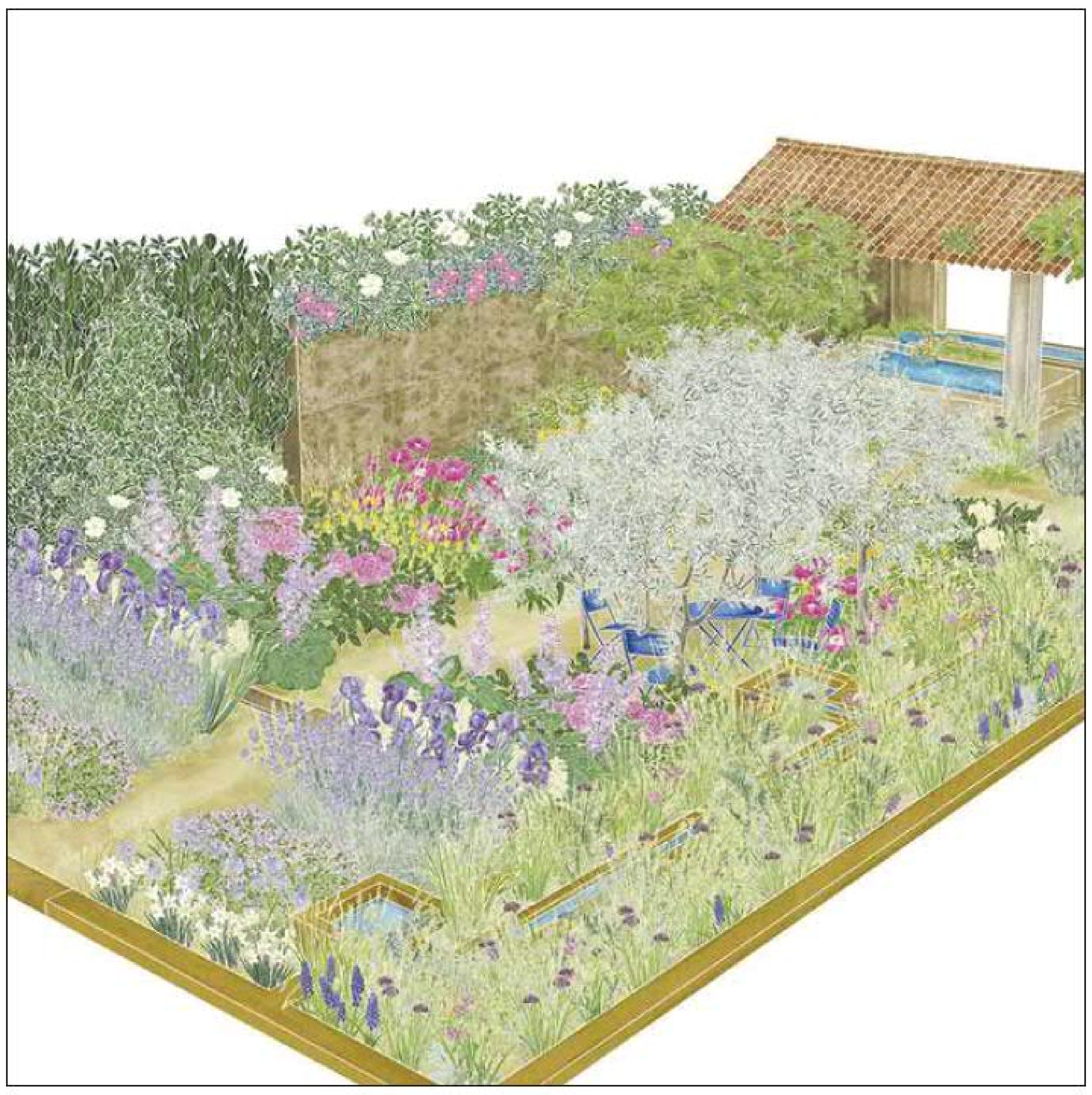
4 Contemporary sculpture
Chris enjoys working with sculptors to create pieces for his gardens. In his 2013 Chelsea Show Garden the tones of Anna Gillespie's piece *To the Limit* are complemented by the planting, which includes *Quercus ilex* and echiums.

Plot RHW8.
Sponsor Morgan Stanley.
Contractor Keith Chapman Landscapes.
Theme A community garden of massed colourful planting unified by the greens of foliage and a framework of clipped box.

2015 Chelsea garden (pictured above, left)

This garden has been designed as part of a community garden in a new development in Poplar, east London. For inspiration, Chris has drawn on the history, industries and cultural melting pot of the area. He uses a strong, geometric framework of clipped box to create a contemporary knot pattern that encloses a vibrant mix of planting. Colours are deliberately clashing – in shades of yellow, tangerine, lime green, pink, blue – to suggest the eclectic range of people, beliefs and cultures of the area. Chris's show gardens are usually subdivided to make a sequence of views but this one is fully revealed from the front, affording a seamless view under the canopies of informally placed field maples to the boundaries. Movement through the garden is along box-edged, sanded limestone pavers arranged as a modified cruciform, which widens out to form a terrace at the back. On the side boundary, a weathered steel portico with diagonal top shelters a sculpture of an adult and child by Anna Gillespie. The same material and shape, which reference the docklands, is used on the back wall where tiles of weathered steel are intersected by two bands of overlapping leaf-shaped tiles. In the centre is a glass canopy that rests on a stylised tree trunk in steel. Water is present in the quartet of playful fountains at the centre of the limestone walkway which automatically turn off when anyone steps on to the garden.

Contact 07721 450355, chrisbeardshaw.com

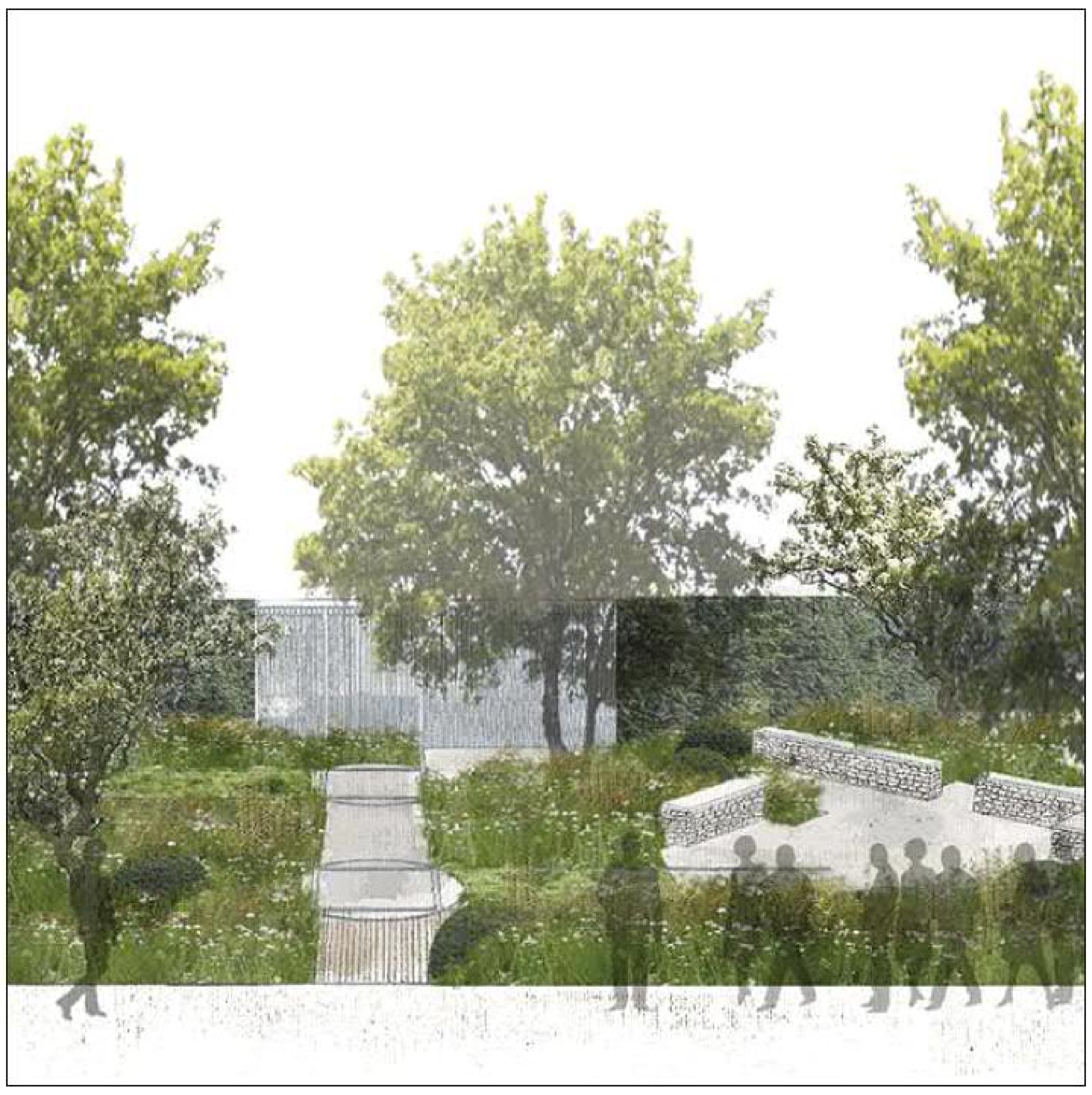


James Basson

Plot	RHW5.
Sponsor	L'Occitane UK Ltd.
Contractor	Peter Dowle.
Theme	A perfume grower's garden in Provence.

James Basson distills the aromatic landscape surrounding the Provençal town of Grasse into a show garden plot. A tufa-dressed path leads through bands of fragrant plants that thrive in arid soils to a grove of shade-giving olives. The path continues to a sunken terrace where clothes can be washed in a traditional tufa pool and laid across rosemary bushes to dry. Here, the water that feeds the pool is channelled into a rill that runs the length of the garden and allows occasional watering of the dry-zone plants. The back boundary is formed by a thicket of Mediterranean trees and shrubs and the adjoining tufa-clad wall is topped by native grasses and shrubs that suggest the continuation of the landscape.

Contact +377 97 97 15 36, scapedesign.com

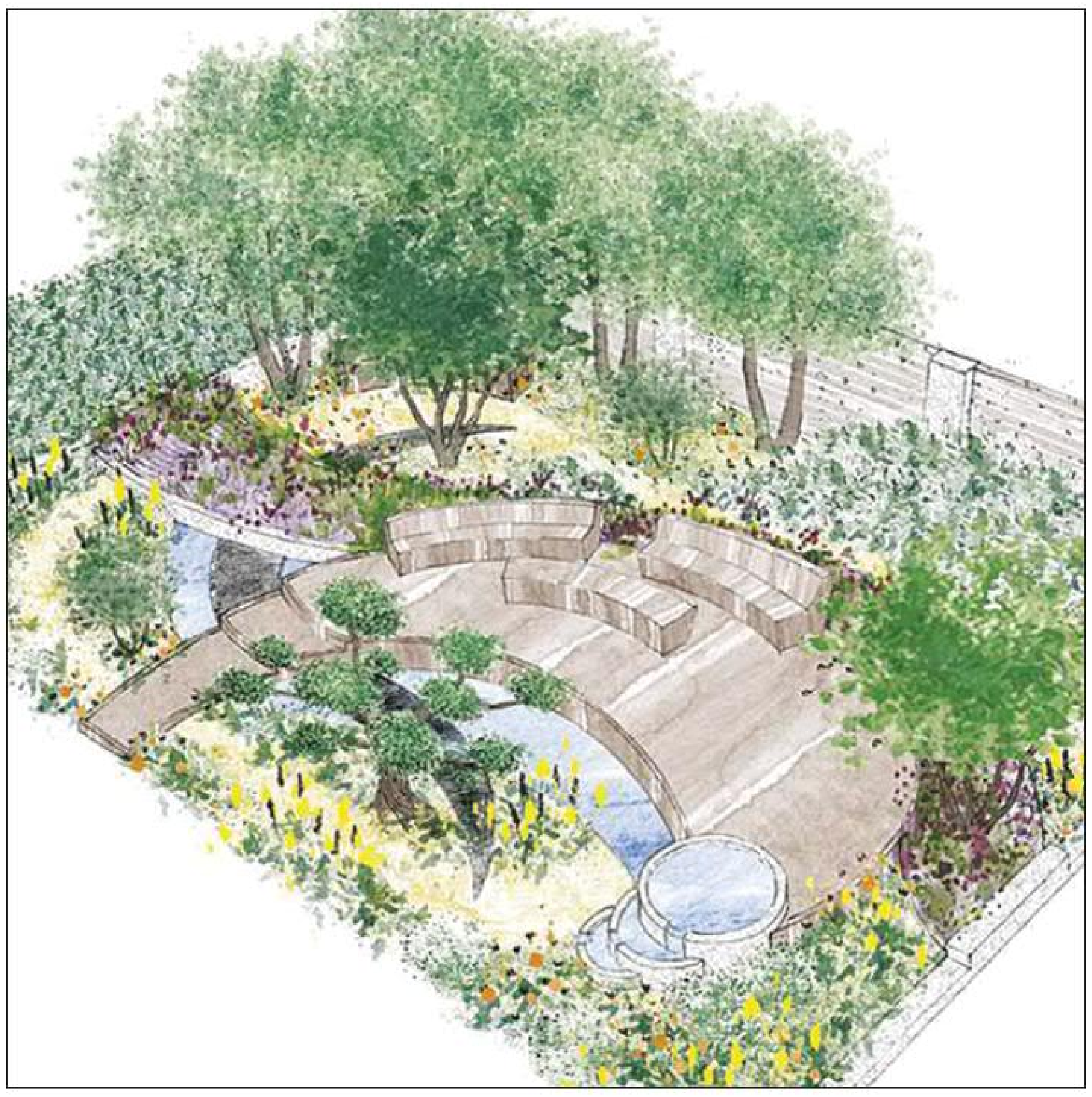


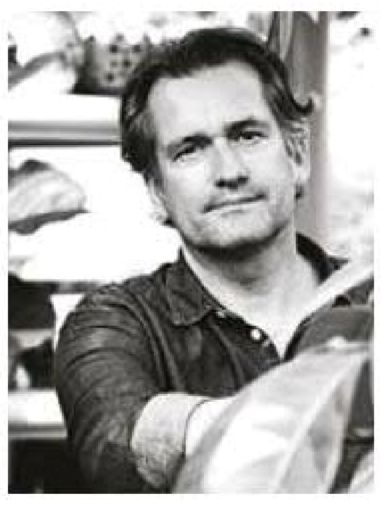
Harry and David Rich

Plot	MA17.
Sponsor	Cloudy Bay and Vital Earth.
Contractor	Rich Landscapes.
Theme	A modern garden, with innovative features, softened by meadow planting in restrained colours.

This is a garden of contrasts, combining aged oak with concrete and glass, and ornamental meadow planting with clipped yew. It's also a garden that's designed for all-year use, with a glass shelter protected by an outer sleeve of oak slats that can be rolled along tracks from one side of the plot to the other. Another innovative feature is the drop-down table and seats that are an integral part of the oak and steel wall at the back of the garden. Concrete-capped dry-stone walls provide seating in the two open areas, which are surrounded by matrix meadow planting, interspersed with pockets of flowers in shades of white and green and rusty browns beneath *Amelanchier lamarckii*.

Contact 01874 712249, richlandscapes.net



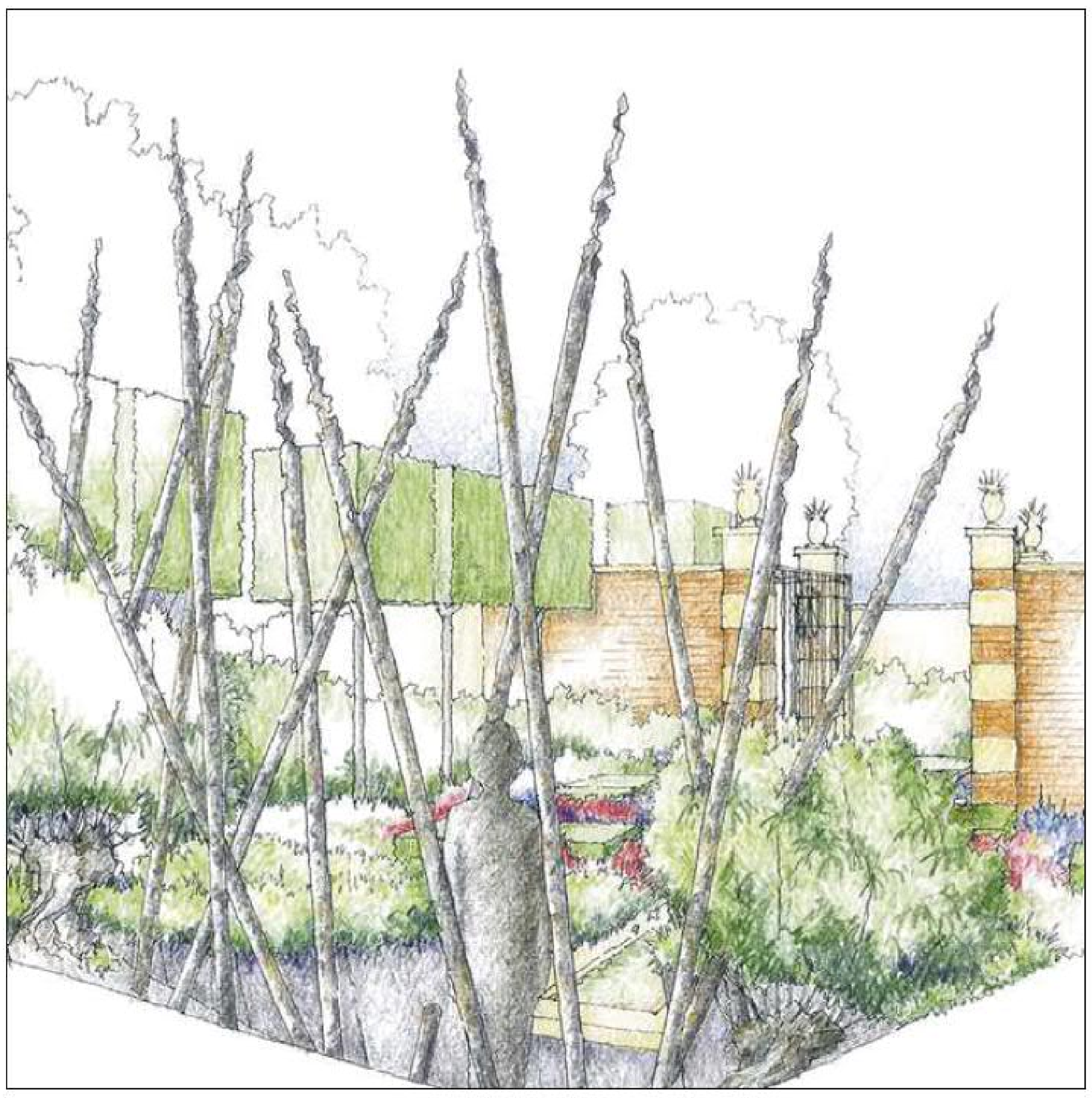


Matthew Wilson

Plot	MA13.
Sponsor	Royal Bank of Canada.
Contractor	Clifton Nurseries.
Theme	Urban garden, with harvested water at its centre, that's sustainably and richly planted.

The natural curves of water courses drive the design of this garden, which drops down from a grove of cork oaks at the back to colourful perennial planting surrounding the striking, cloud-pruned olive tree at the front. A ribbon of striated hornfels stone weaves in and out of the water channel, suggesting a stony riverbed, while the trio of pools, encased in dry-stone walling, oxygenate the water before it is recycled. Curved seating frames the western red cedar deck that's made from planks of varying widths. More than two thirds of the plants are drought tolerant, and the rest, including an inspiring number of edibles, such as the pineapple-guava hedge, can be watered by the harvested water system.

Contact 020 7289 6851, matthewwilsongardener.co.uk

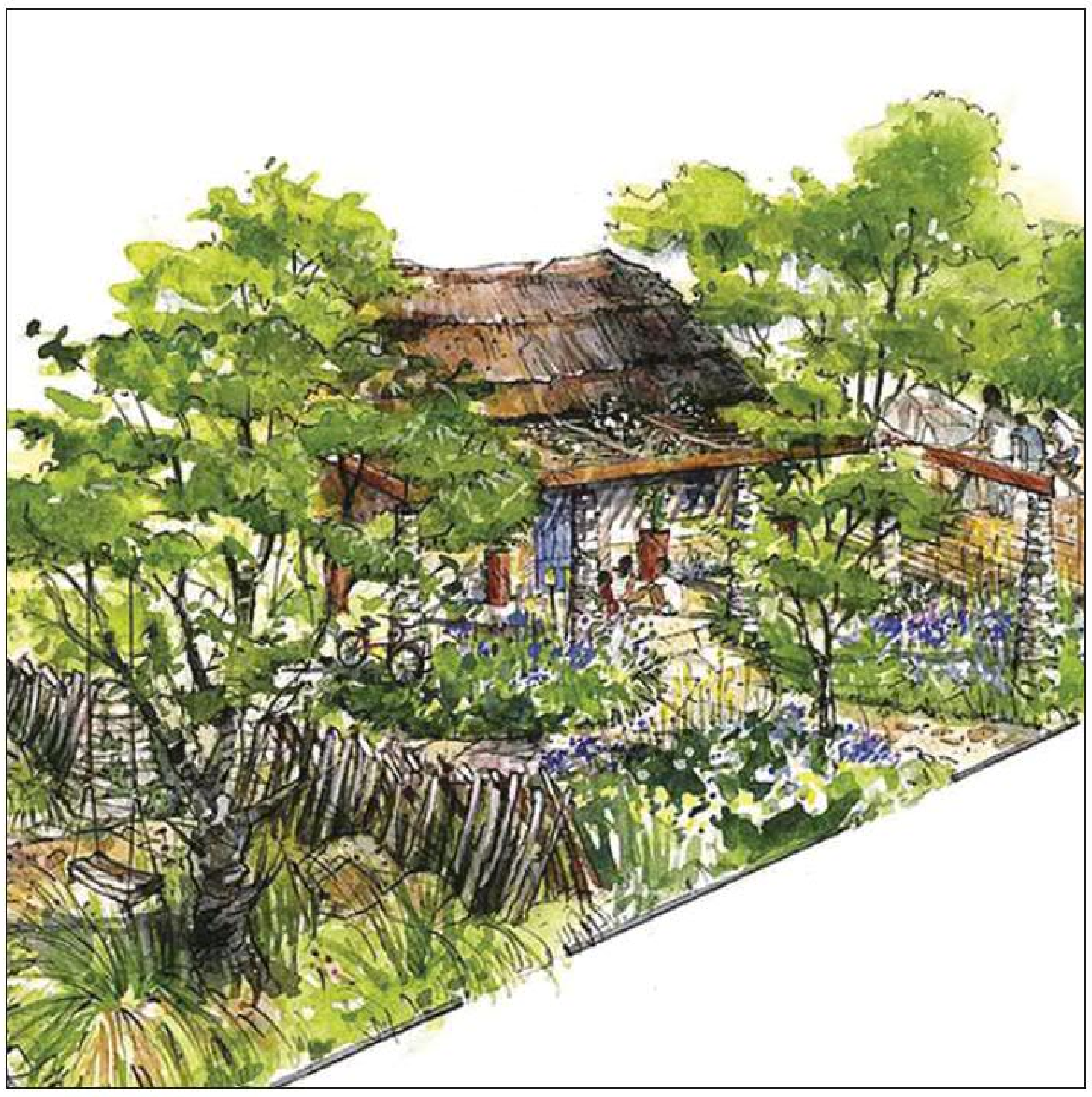


Andrew Wilson and Gavin McWilliam

Plot	RHW1.
Sponsor	Darwin Property Investment Management.
Contractor	Outdoor Options.
Theme	A garden that commemorates the 1815 Battle of Waterloo.

Commemorating the 200th anniversary of Wellington's victory at the Battle of Waterloo and Wellington College's role as a memorial to his legacy, the garden evokes the bleakness of the battle and the subsequent greening of the landscape, as well as the iconic architecture of the college. The explosive nature of the battlefield, suggested by pollarded willows, alongside rusted steel poles, gives way to meadow planting and then to the grasses and perennials typical of the college's formal gardens. Water is carried diagonally across the garden in a rill, moving the eye to the open gates and the courtyard beyond, where a grove of seedling oaks references the college's mature oaks.

Contact 020 3002 6601, wmstudio.co.uk

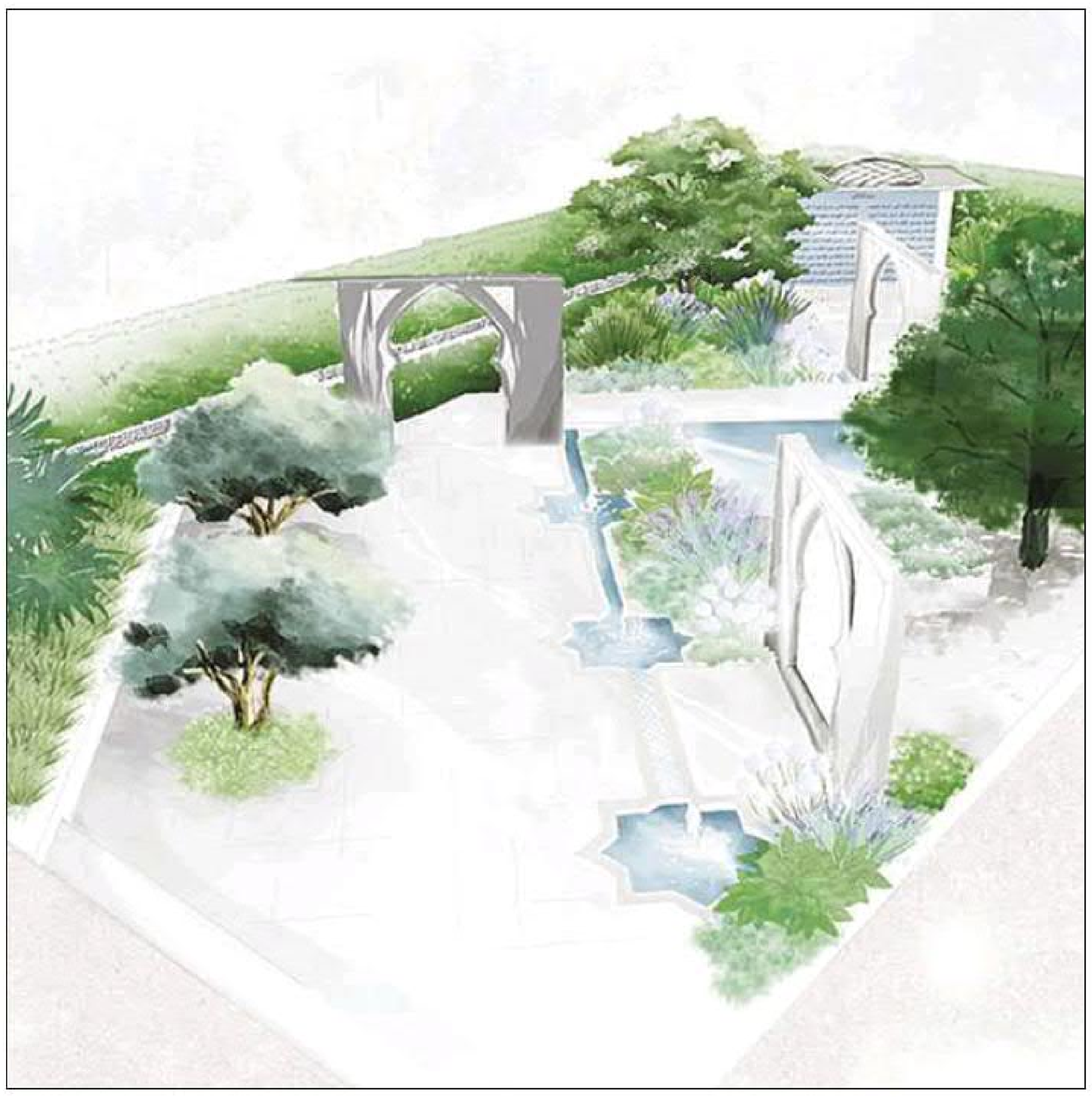


Matthew Keightley

Plot	MA16.
Sponsor	David Brownlow Charitable Foundation, Sentenbale, The Prince's Foundation for Building Community.
Contractor	Rosebank Landscapes.
Theme	A garden that celebrates a new centre for vulnerable children in Lesotho.

Inspired by the landscape and traditional construction techniques of Lesotho, this three-part garden has at its centre a thatched building that represents the Mamohato Children's Centre for youngsters coming to terms with HIV. The garden around it, planted with familiar Chelsea perennials in numerous bold colours, suggests a place of refuge. On either side, linked by a sandstone path, the planting evokes the wider landscape; at the front cork oak and grasses shot through with kniphofia and poppies represent the arid climate. The back section suggests the lush, rocky regions where water tumbles over sandstone boulders.

Contact 01628 854 127, rosebank.co.uk



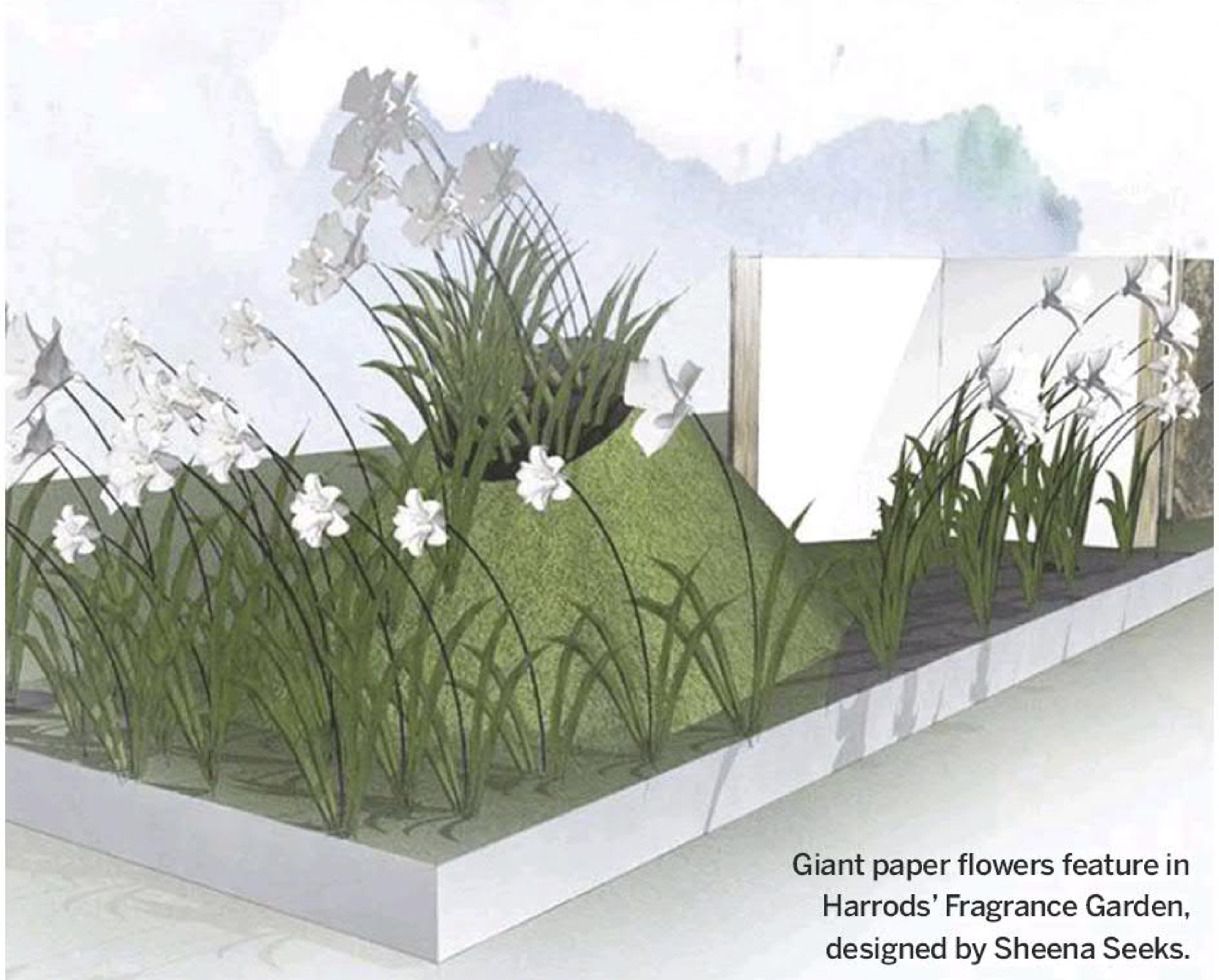
Kamelia Bin Zaal

Plot	MA20.
Sponsor	Al Barari.
Contractor	The Outdoor Room.
Theme	Sensory garden that celebrates Islamic and Arabic culture.

First-time Chelsea designer Kamelia Bin Zaal brings a fresh approach to the traditional quadrant design of Islamic courtyard gardens. Incorporating plants and materials from various countries touched by Arabic and Islamic culture, the design is based on an Arabic pattern that's set at a 45-degree angle. This creates a choice of routes through the pale grey arches into four discrete spaces. Central to the design is water, which tumbles down a white wall, inscribed with a verse from the Quran, into a square pool. From here it flows into a rill with striking star-shaped detailing. Unusual planting includes a clipped olive hedge, a bed filled with cardamom, lemongrass and ginger, and the glaucous palm *Bismarckia nobilis*.

Contact +971 4 388 6040, secondnature.ae

The pomegranate tree *Punica granatum* features in several show gardens.


Giant paper flowers feature in Harrods' Fragrance Garden, designed by Sheena Seeks.

***Primula bulleyana*.**

***Salix alba* var. *vitellina* 'Britzensis'.**

***Aloe mitriformis*.**

***Iris* 'Love's Tune'.**

Chelsea trends

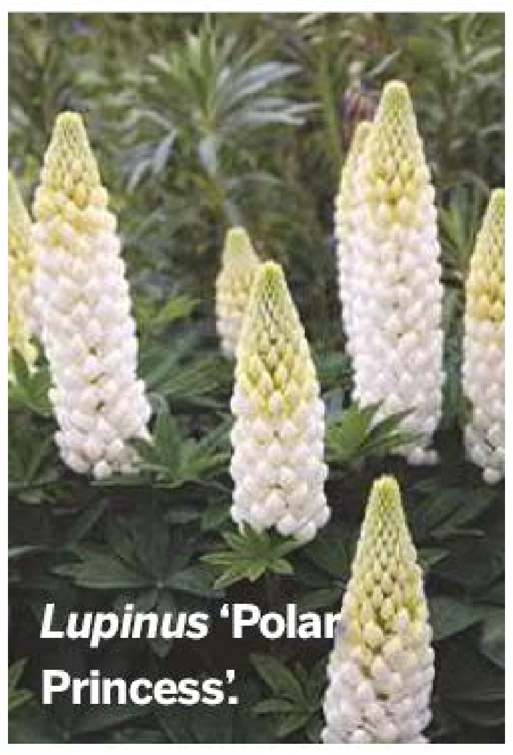
Chelsea is the show that wields the most influence on garden design and planting. Annie Gatti looks at this year's dominant themes and innovations

Show garden themes at Chelsea are usually a melding of the sponsor's 'message' and the designer's often quite personal interpretation of that brief. This year many designers have envisaged their gardens as refuges or sanctuaries – from conflict, ill health, or the stresses of modern living. English-inspired gardens offer us soft perennials and grasses along with the wild flower plantings that have dominated Chelsea in recent years, with fewer box balls and more shrubs for structure. Perhaps because of a growing interest in drought-tolerant plantings, and also because several of the show gardens feature native plants from hotter climes such as Provençal France, United Arab Emirates, Australia and Lesotho, the Chelsea palette will be more striking and varied than usual. Palm trees and pomegranates, agaves and aloes, pistachio shrubs and tuberoses should provide drama, scent and colour.

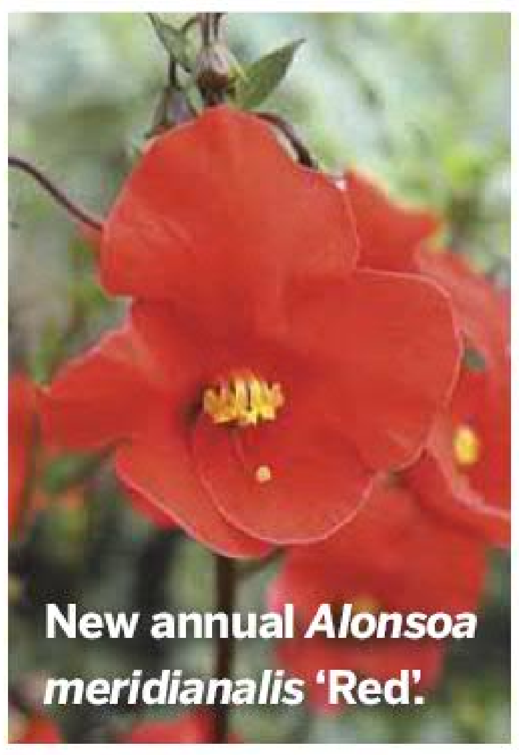
There's an exciting boldness of colour combinations across many of the gardens too, exemplified by Marcus Barnett's saturated palette in *The Telegraph* Garden and the shrub-rich planting of Dan Pearson's Laurent-Perrier garden. Rich yellows, zingy pinks, strong reds and blues are provided by perennials such as primulas, geums, lupins and kniphofias with, weather permitting, a number of unusual annuals such as *Gomphrena globosa* (Beauty of Islam), *Alonsoa meridianalis* 'Red' (*The Telegraph* Garden) and *Papaver aculeatum* (Sentebale). Earthy colours are embraced by Sarah Eberle, who is returning to Chelsea with gardens in both the Artisan and Fresh categories, and Harry and David Rich who plan to include two new varieties, *Baptisia* 'Dutch Chocolate' and *Anthriscus* 'Kabin', both supplied by Hortus Loci, in their confident meadow palette in the Cloudy Bay Garden.

Visitors will be treated to the soothing sound of falling water, tumbling from high sandstone rocks (Laurent-Perrier) and a wall-top pool (*The Telegraph* Garden), down walls (Homebase Urban Retreat and Beauty of Islam), forming a circular waterfall (Personal Universe Garden) and flowing underground (Brewin Dolphin). Here designer Darren Hawkes's choice of slate – more than 40,000 pieces cut and fixed by hand – for hard landscaping stands out among the more

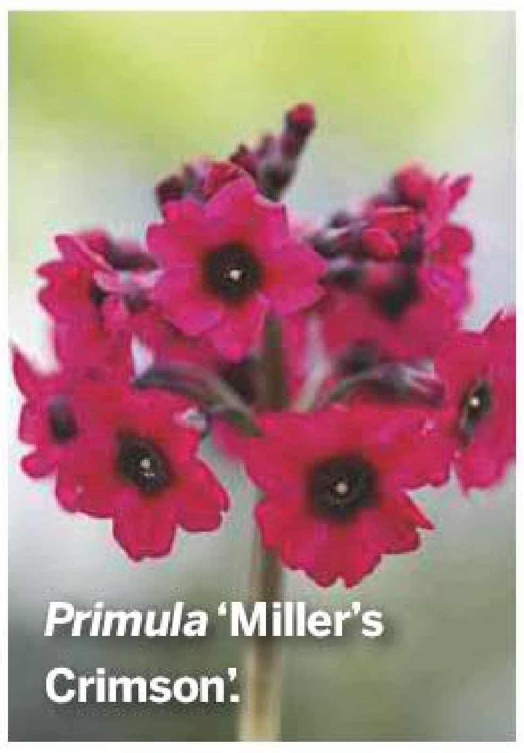
CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: GAP PHOTOS / PETER STANLEY; SHEENA SEEKS; FLOWERPHOTOS / ALAMY; REX MAY / ALAMY; GAP PHOTOS / SABINA RUBER; FUMINARI TODAKA; GAP PHOTOS / JAN SMITH; GAP PHOTOS / JONATHAN BUCKLEY - DESIGN: CHRISTOPHER LLOYD, GREAT DIXTER; GAP PHOTOS / HEATHER EDWARDS



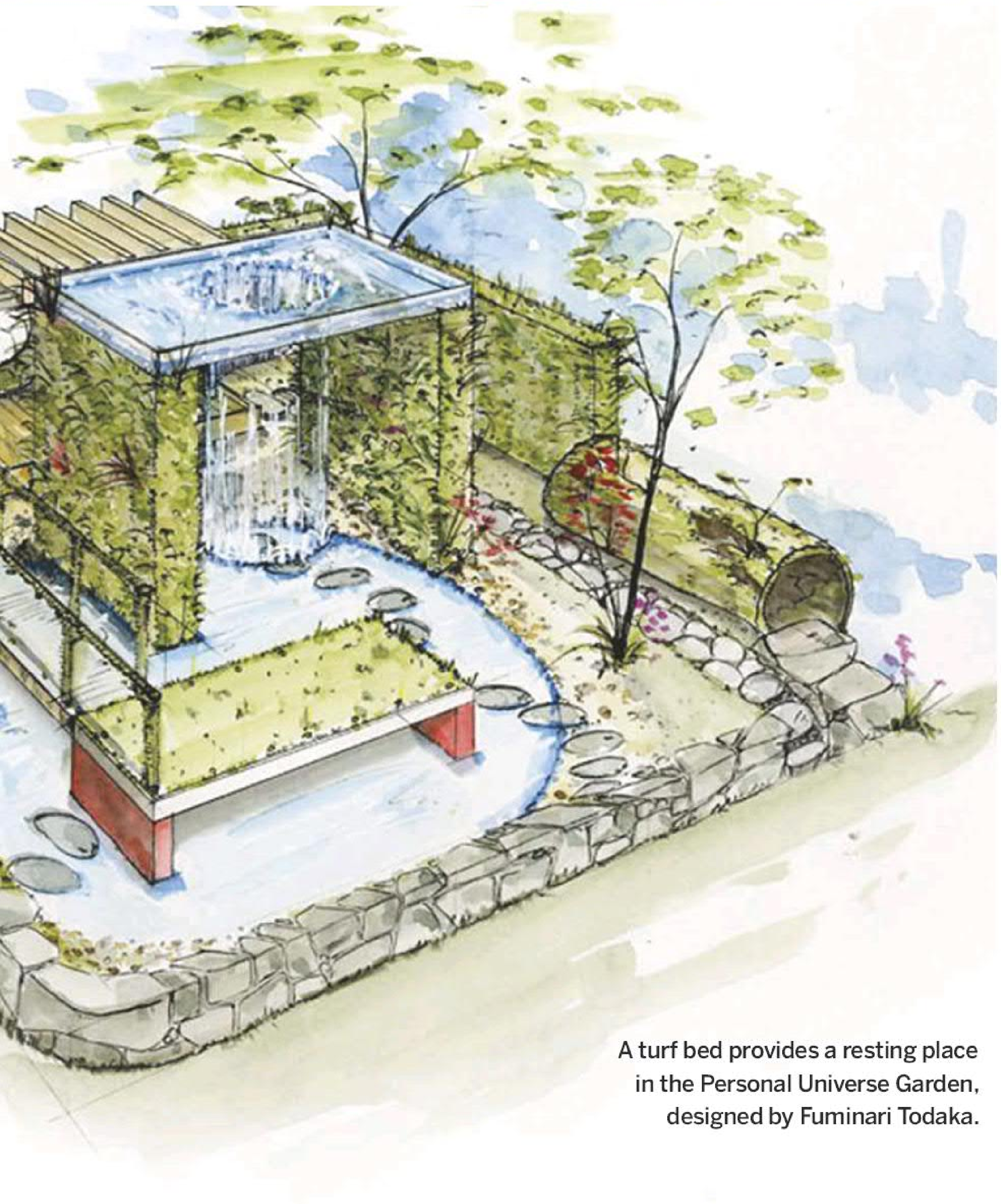
Lupinus 'Polar Princess'.



New annual *Alonsoa meridianalis* 'Red'.



Primula 'Miller's Crimson'.



A turf bed provides a resting place in the Personal Universe Garden, designed by Fuminari Todaka.

Don't miss

Perennial violas in the Great Pavilion, where a range of these dainty and long-flowering hardy varieties are displayed in containers and garden settings. Bury your nose in Wildegoose Nursery's new introduction, 'Jean Jeannie'. Stand GPH7.

Tom Hare's willow nest (right), inspired by the shape of an oak leaf. Woven from 1,000 pieces of willow, it is both an undulating sculpture and unique seat for up to three people. Stand SEW6.

The Chelsea Revival trug in A Trugmaker's Garden. A beautifully crafted, extra-deep traditional willow and chestnut trug, perfect for gathering lots of fruit. It's a limited edition so snap one up now, £150 from truggery.co.uk. Stand SEW1.

Tom Stogdon's ammonite-inspired sculpture (above) in the M&G Garden, made from pieces of limestone, emerging from the pond-side planting. Stand MA15.

The Manu Ibiss hanging chair (right) from Maffam Freeform. This latticework chair by Latvian designer Raimonds Cirulis is handwoven from basalt fibres. Place your pre-show order at maffamfree.com. Stand FR40.

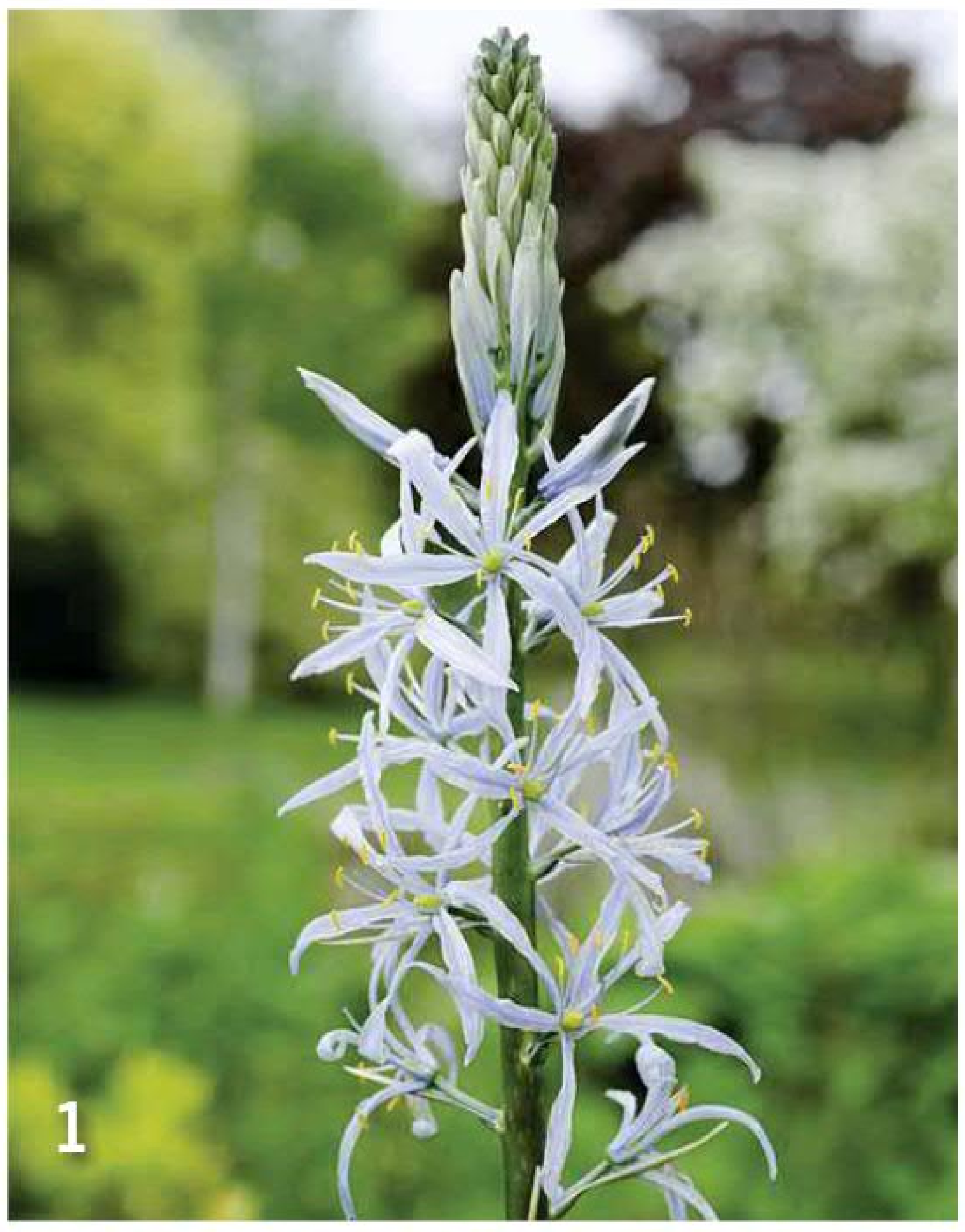
familiar surfaces of stone, gravel and timber. Glass, weathered and stainless steel and concrete bring a more contemporary feel to several urban and community gardens, including the striking glass cube shelter in the Cloudy Bay Garden and the elegant stainless-steel dome laser cut with an Islamic pattern in the Beauty of Islam Garden, but it's the Fresh gardens, as might be expected, that show a more cutting-edge use of materials.

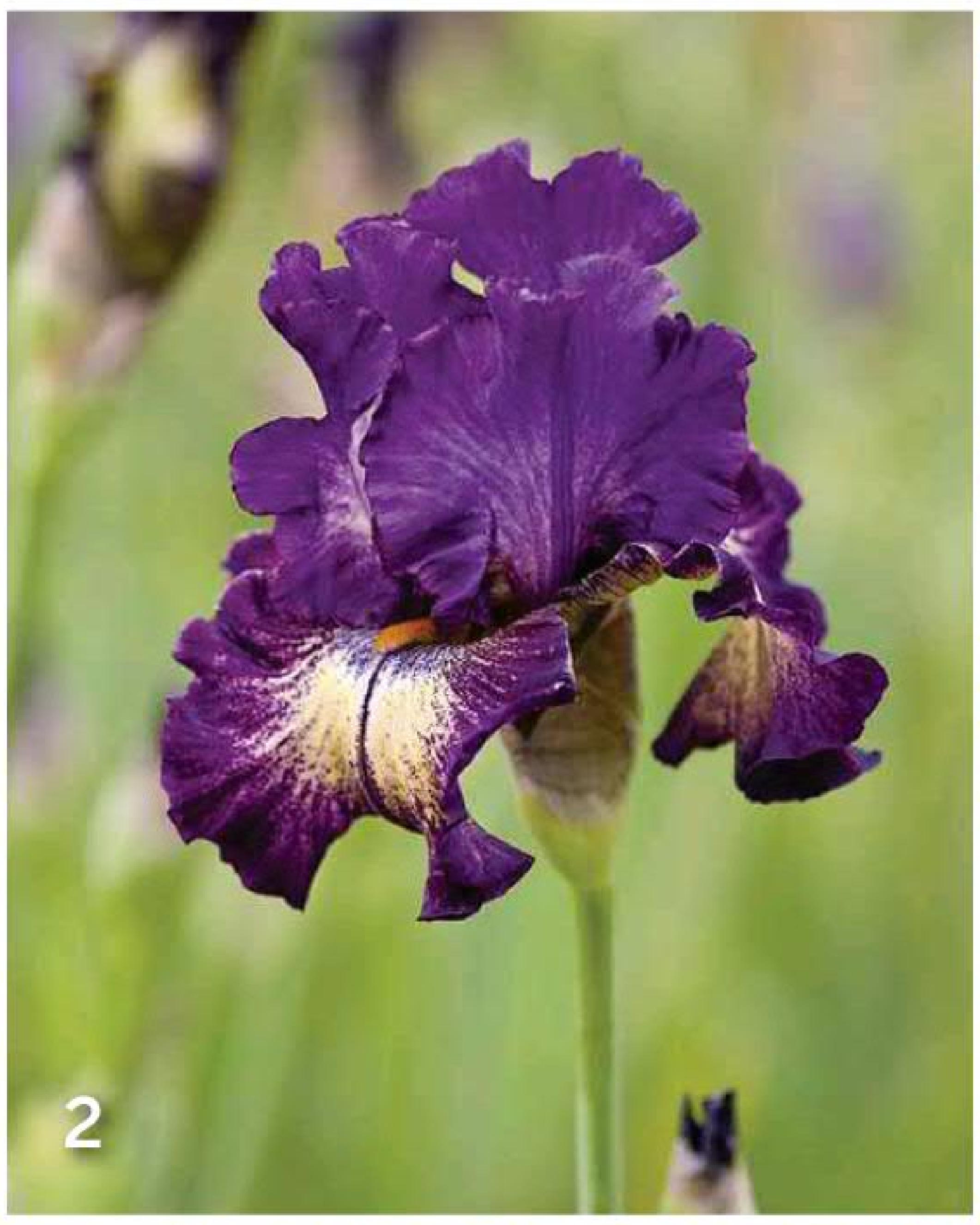
John Warland (World Vision) uses acrylic rods as the central feature in his conceptual rice paddy, while Chelsea newcomer Sheena Seeks also uses acrylic for the giant test tubes enclosing a range of scented plants used to make perfume in her Fragrance Garden. Fernando Gonzalez shows how the casting resin Jesmonite can be cut, using technology from the aerospace industry, to make a shimmering organic structure that interplays with the relaxed planting.

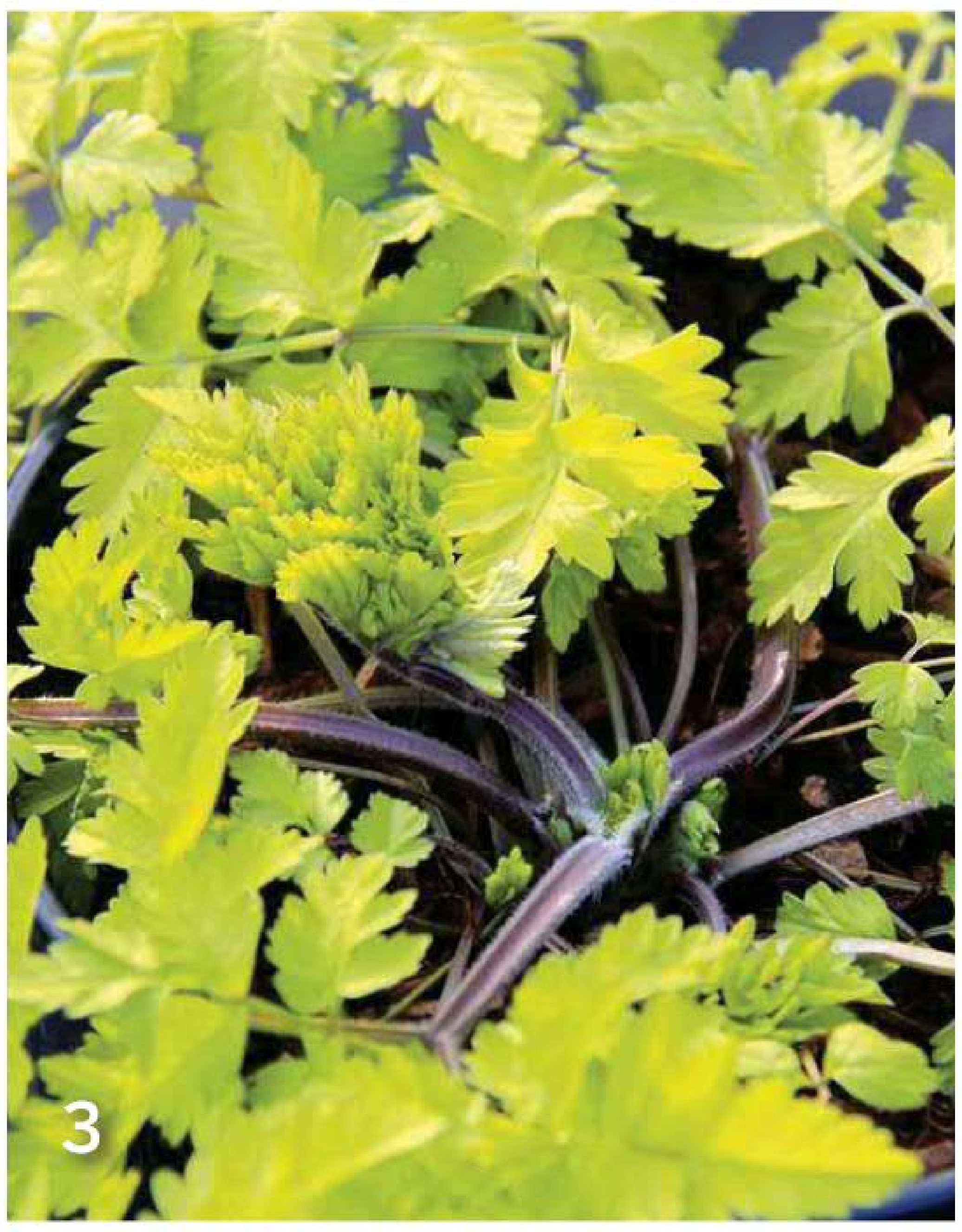
Native trees tick the sustainability box and have been specified by many designers. English oaks are the signature trees for several gardens this year, with oak saplings making an appearance as symbols of regeneration. Field maples and hawthorns have taken over from birches, and expect to see the upright native willow *Salix alba*. Cork oaks are the tree of choice for several drought-tolerant plantings.

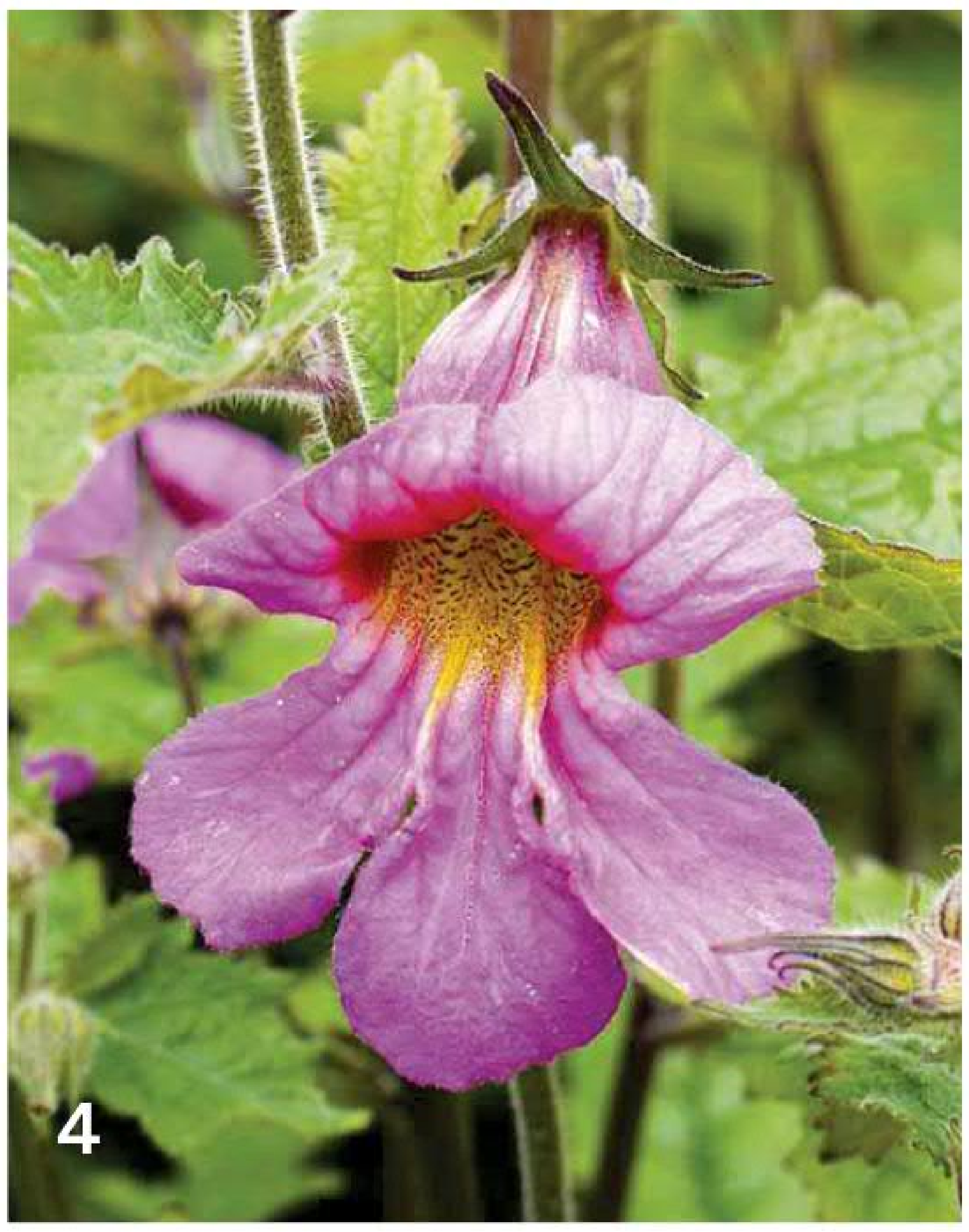
Among the new exhibitors in the Great Pavilion are two viola nurseries, Wildegoose Nursery and Wyndford Farm Plants, both exhibiting hardy perennial types. One or two sorts of *Viola cornuta* have been used in recent show gardens but perhaps these displays will generate a more widespread revival. Iris lovers can indulge in displays of old and new varieties – Sarah Cook is showing tall, bearded cultivars bred by Sir Cedric Morris that have not been seen at Chelsea for more than 60 years, while Claire Austin, who returns after a four-year absence, is launching four new culitavars, including 'Parting Glances', a velvet-purple and old-gold beauty.

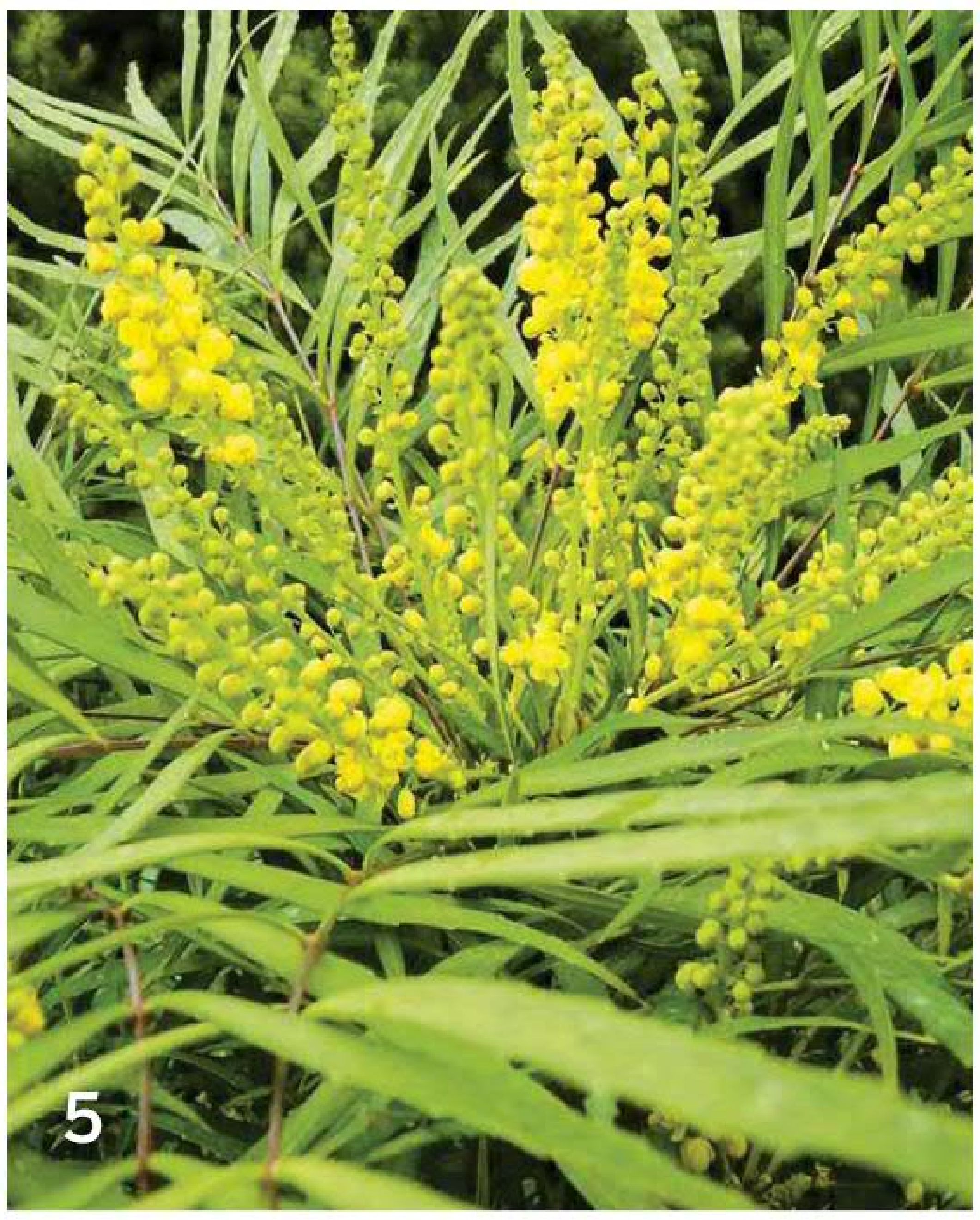
The Artisan gardens offer several journeys back in time. It will be hard to match the planting prowess of Japanese landscape artist Kazuyuki Ishihara's tenth Chelsea garden (*Edo no Niwa* – Edo Garden), his last in the style he calls 'Awakening Japanese Nostalgia'. □

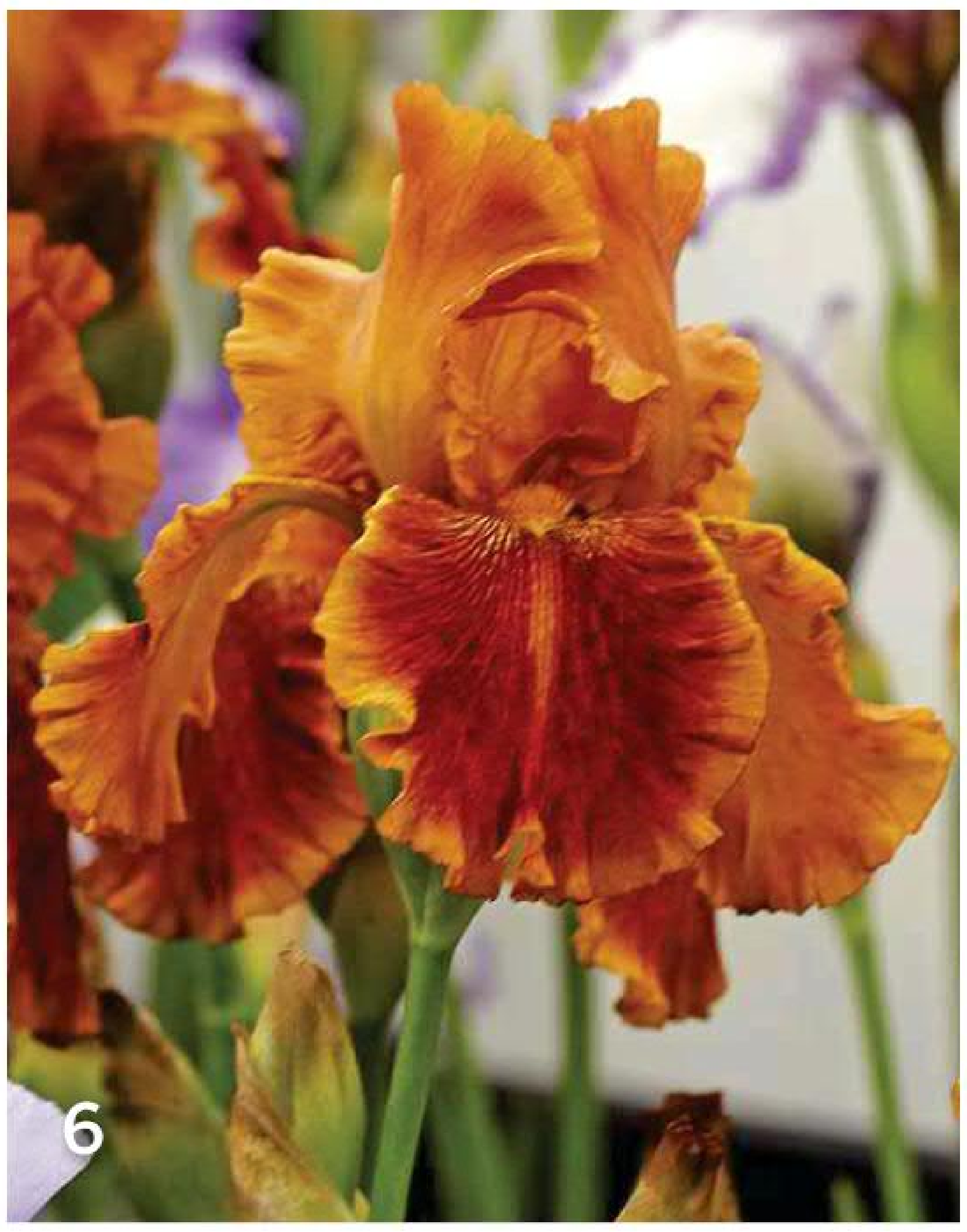












1 *Camassia cusickii*

Hare Spring Cottage Plants Features on The Morgan Stanley Healthy Cities Garden

An elegant, hardy, bulbous perennial with blue, starry, six-petalled flowers, opening from bottom to top on sturdy racemes during May/June. Excellent for naturalising. Also look out for 'Zwanenburg' a cultivar in a darker blue with light veining. **H** 75cm.

2 *Iris* 'Out of the Dark'

Claire Austin Chelsea Stand GPC7

This rosy mauve, tall bearded iris is simply stunning and one of the loveliest of all the irises that flowered at the nursery last year. The thick ruffled petals have large, soft yellow stains rivered into the falls and vivid orange beards. It is heavily scented and flowers from early to mid June. **H** 102cm. **S** 75cm.

3 *Anthriscus sylvestris* 'Kabir'

Hortus Loci/Whitewater Nursery

Features on the Cloudy Bay Garden

A golden sport of our native cow parsley. Fresh new spring growth is a bright lime-green suffused gold. As it matures this darkens to a bright green. White umbels from May to June. Easy in damp soil in sun or part shade and lovely with spring bulbs. **H** 60-75cm.

4 *Rehmannia* Walberton's 'Magic Dragon'

Hardy's Garden Plants Chelsea stand GPF/4

The exotic, 6cm-wide flowers are sterile and appear throughout summer. Easy to grow in sun or part shade in any reasonable soil. It has survived the last four winters outside, re-growing in spring. Plants cut back in early summer will re-flower. **H** 70cm.

5 *Mahonia eurybracteata* subsp. *ganpinensis* 'Soft Caress'

Crocus Features on Laurent-Perrier Garden

This is the first mahonia to have spine-free leaves. It is a compact, evergreen shrub, so ideal for larger pots, or equally a fine addition to either a sunny or partially shaded border. Flowers August to October when many other plants have finished flowering. **H** 1m. **S** 1m.

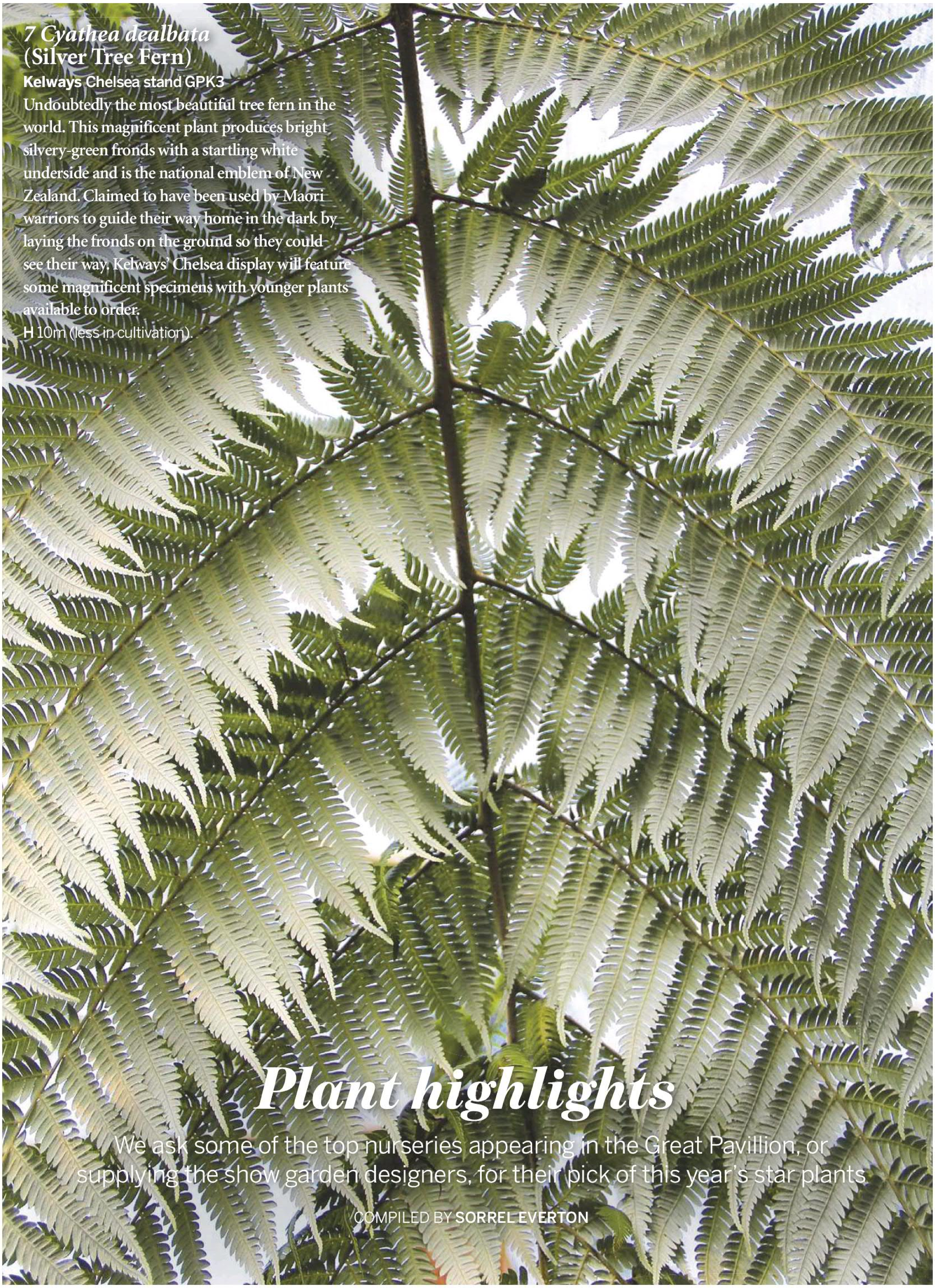
6 *Iris* 'Carnival Time'

Todd's Botanics Chelsea Stand GPM4

Another spectacular iris to look out for is this scented, tall bearded variety that has velvety burnt-orange falls with pale amber streaks and a soft gingery beard. The colour is unusual in the garden and works particularly well with ornamental grasses. Loves the sunniest site. **H** 80cm. **S** 40cm.

1 JASON INGRAM; 2 CLIVE NICHOLS; 6 DEREK HARRIS / THE GARDEN COLLECTION

- Please note that the appearance of these plants is dependent on weather conditions leading up to the show.



7 Cyathea dealbata (Silver Tree Fern)

Kelways Chelsea stand GPK3

Undoubtedly the most beautiful tree fern in the world. This magnificent plant produces bright silvery-green fronds with a startling white underside and is the national emblem of New Zealand. Claimed to have been used by Maori warriors to guide their way home in the dark by laying the fronds on the ground so they could see their way. Kelways' Chelsea display will feature some magnificent specimens with younger plants available to order.

H 10m (less in cultivation).

Plant highlights

We ask some of the top nurseries appearing in the Great Pavillion, or supplying the show garden designers, for their pick of this year's star plants

COMPILED BY **SORREL EVERTON**

Surrounded by luxuriant planting, the house – said to be the birthplace of printer William Caxton – dates back to the 14th century. Writer and diplomat Harold Nicolson and his wife, the writer and gardener Vita Sackville-West, moved into the house in 1915 and extended it by adding on a 16th-century barn (on the right of the image).

First love

Sissinghurst may scoop all the accolades but Long Barn, the first English garden created by Vita Sackville-West and Harold Nicolson, is wonderfully romantic and flourishes in the loving hands of owners Rebecca and Lars Lemonius

WORDS **TIM RICHARDSON** PHOTOGRAPHS **CLAIRE TAKACS**

In brief

Name Long Barn.
What South-facing Edwardian flower garden.
Where Sevenoaks Weald, Kent.
Points of interest Herbaceous borders, roses, yew topiary, hedges and a new spring garden. The first English garden created by Vita Sackville-West and husband Harold Nicolson.
Size Three acres.
Climate Open to the wind.
Soil 'Solid clay', according to the owner.
Hardiness rating USDA 8.

Always the bridesmaid, never the bride – that has been the fate of Long Barn, the garden in the Kentish Weald that Vita Sackville-West and Harold Nicolson made before they came across a certain semi-derelict castle and created what is probably the most famous garden of the 20th century. But Long Barn has its own magic. It would certainly be more celebrated were it not perpetually in the shadow of its more glamorous sister.

Harold and Vita bought the gloriously misshapen 14th-century house in 1915 and lived there for 15 years, honing both their gardening and design skills. Remembering the house, Vita and Harold's son Nigel Nicolson wrote: 'The floors sloped crazily, so that every piece of furniture appeared crippled, and the roof was held together less by construction than by natural angles of repose. In place of a garden there was a chute of rubble and a tangle of briars and nettles.'

The 16th-century 'long barn' was moved up the hill to its current position next to the house and transformed into a sitting room. From here, the garden gently falls away to the south, with fields and woodland beyond. Its most striking element is the avenue of 20 mature, clipped Irish yews that creates a dynamic east-west axis, but lawns on the wide terraces mean that overall the impression is not of a garden made up of different garden 'rooms', despite an underlying cellular structure.

Vita later reminisced, 'I myself took to gardening quite late in life. I must have been at least 22.' In fact she was 23 when she arrived at

Continues on page 63 ▷

Long Barn has its own magic and would be more celebrated were it not perpetually in the shadow of its more glamorous sister

THIS IMAGE
The Dutch Garden, on the third and lowest level of the garden, is distinguished by richly planted borders and brick paths.

OPPOSITE (clockwise, from top left)
The Dutch garden features several peonies, inlcuding *Paeonia lactiflora* 'Shirley Temple'. The wine red of *Rosa* Prospero (= 'Auspero') is offset by the pretty pink *Phuopsis stylosa*. Grown on hazel structures *Clematis* 'Gipsy Queen' adds height to the borders. Each year Rebecca moves the self-seeding *Lychnis coronaria* around the garden.

Five features

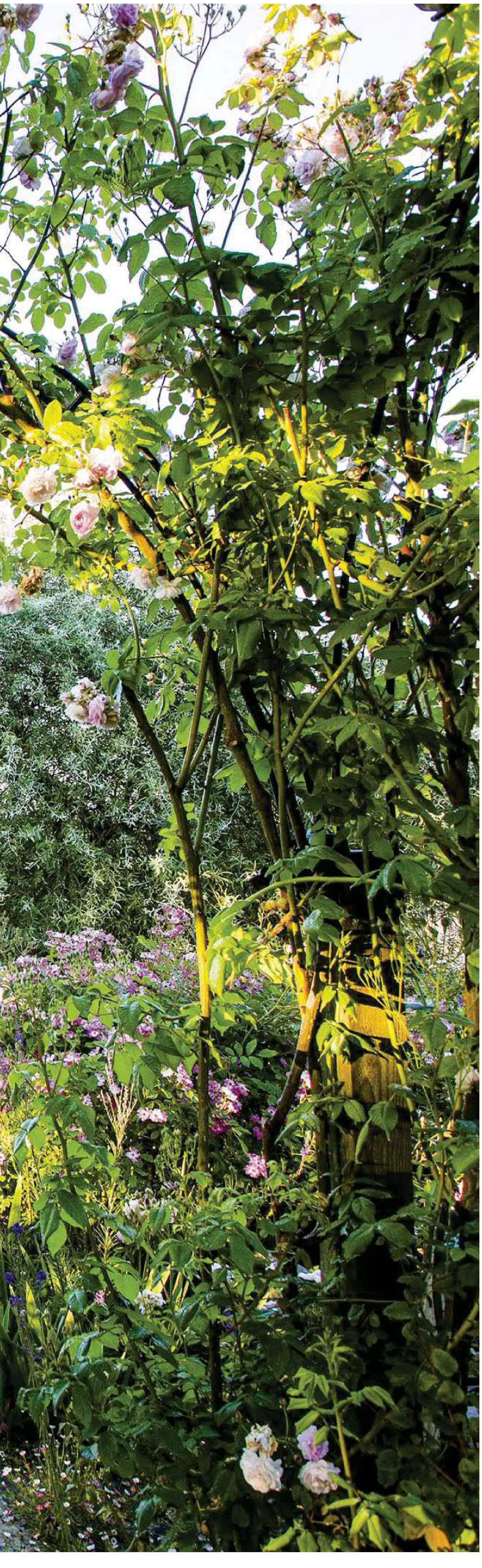
That add to Long Barn's unique charm

1 Avenue of Irish yews

These are the most striking element of the garden, creating both a strong east-west axis and an underlying feeling of dynamism.

2 Rose Walk

This fragrant arcade at the top of the garden opens out on to a lawn and steps leading down to the Dutch Garden. The north-south pathway is an effective counterpoint to the mainly east-to-west direction of the garden.



3 Classical Grove

Harold and Vita created an informal, 'Georgian' atmosphere in this area, one of several different styles with which they experimented at Long Barn.

4 Dutch Garden

Raised redbrick beds – possibly laid out to a design by architect Edwin Lutyens – provide a formal structure from which romantic herbaceous plantings explode.

5 Secret Garden

One of the areas that seems to foreshadow Sissinghurst – in this case because of the mysterious room-like atmosphere and the use of sculpture.

Long Barn has its own character that has been revealed and enhanced by the current owners, with a style that is romantically soft and effervescent

THIS IMAGE
The silver-grey spikes of verbascum – a constant note of the planting scheme – grow around the steps leading up to the Rose Walk.
RIGHT (clockwise, from top left)
Erigeron karvinskianus adorn walls and paths. *Rosa* 'The Fairy' flowers for months, bringing colour to the top of the wall by the house. The garnet-coloured *Penstemon* 'Andenken an Friedrich Hahn' grows in profusion. Rebecca underplants *Iris* 'Jane Philips' with *Cerinthe major* 'Purpurascens'.

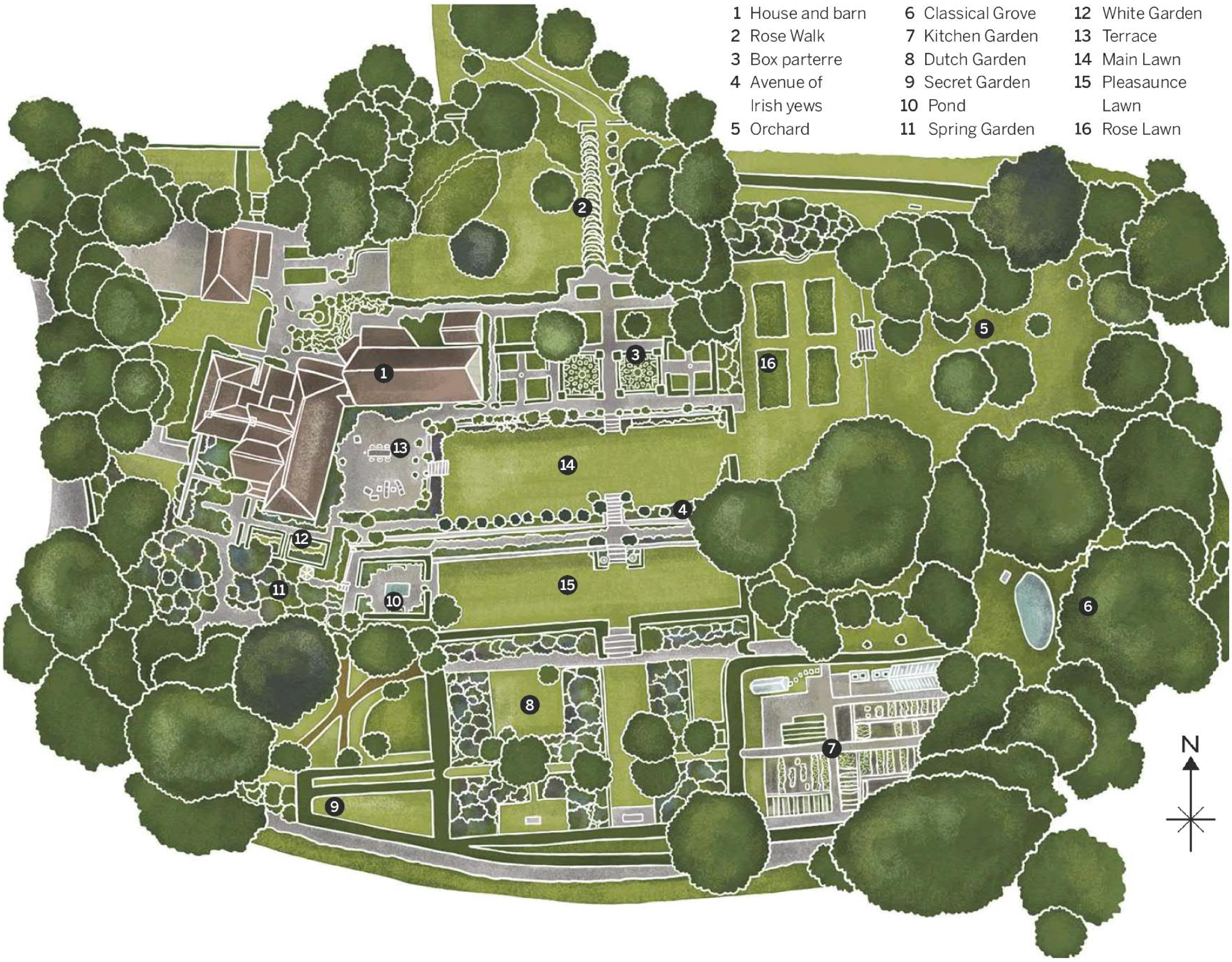
▷ Long Barn. She and Harold dived in with gusto, he ordering plants from nurseries and she making horticulture a pendant to her writing life. In one letter to Harold, in 1926, she is ecstatic about her 'wood garden', as she called it, using the word 'alive' repeatedly. Later that year Harold wrote to Vita, inveigling against rhododendrons (then in fashion), specimen trees and in fact all non-natives except flowers: 'You see, I think our stunt at Long Barn is to keep the Kentish farm background, and in that background to embroider as much as we like.' These are the same ideas that came to inform Sissinghurst.

Long Barn has its own character, then – something Nigel Nicolson dubbed 'an atmosphere of 14th-century rusticated innocence' – and this has been revealed and enhanced since 2007 by the current owners, Rebecca and Lars Lemonius, who employ two gardeners (one full-time). The style is romantically soft and effervescent, with Rebecca stating: "It's loose – but I don't want it too loose. I want to keep it looking natural without it becoming a mess."

The key to this tone lies with self-seeding or spreading plants, including the white umbellifer *Ammi majus*, daisy-like erigeron and feverfew, yellow santolina and helichrysum, vivid purple *Campanula portenschlagiana* (in the walls), glaucous *Artemisia* 'Powis Castle' and an un-named plum-coloured poppy sourced from a Dutch garden. Roses are another staple, with cultivars including 'Tuscany Superb', 'Madame Alfred Carrière', Prospero (= 'Auspero'), William Shakespeare (= 'Ausroyal') and Munstead Wood (= 'Ausbernard'). ▷

GARDEN PLAN

1 House and barn
2 Rose Walk
3 Box parterre
4 Avenue of Irish yews
5 Orchard
6 Classical Grove
7 Kitchen Garden
8 Dutch Garden
9 Secret Garden
10 Pond
11 Spring Garden
12 White Garden
13 Terrace
14 Main Lawn
15 Pleasaunce Lawn
16 Rose Lawn



GARDEN PLAN BY HANNAH Mc VICAR

▷ Earlier in the season irises, such as 'Jane Phillips' and 'Black Swan', take centre stage, while dark penstemons (notably 'Raven' and 'Andenken an Friedrich Hahn') also play their part.

The brickwork terrace is a classic suntrap and has been a favourite sitting place for generations of owners, today enlivened by a large *Fremontodendron* 'California Glory' that grows against the barn wall. A path extends eastwards above the lawn, accompanied by clipped balls of box and hebe, and masses of purple verbascum. At the far end of the barn is a box parterre and then, leading north and upwards, a scented rose walk with twisted-hazel arches.

Just below the main lawn, on another wide terrace, is the Pleasaunce Lawn, with a small formal pool enclosed by hedges at its western end. As Rebecca reflects: "If you terrace you naturally start to create garden rooms." The herbaceous beds here contain one or two more unusual plants, including *Tritelia* 'Ocean Queen'.

The Dutch Garden, occupying the largest and lowest terrace, was reputedly laid out by Edwin Lutyens – and it does express a certain spatial confidence. Today the six raised beds are the proverbial 'riot of colour', with clematis, daylilies, ligularia, alliums, roses, phlox, poppies, geraniums, diascia, sedums, aquilegias, echinops and veronica (including a rather lovely *V. austriaca* subsp. *teucrium* 'Crater Lake Blue'). An underlying order is maintained by the geometery of the beds and corner plantings of white-flowered Korean hill cherry (*Prunus verecunda*).

East of the compartmented areas the garden dissolves into more informal spaces. There is, for example, a former tennis court, which is now the Rose Lawn, an old orchard – with more roses, and snakeshead fritillaries and orchids in spring – and the Classical Grove, with statuary set amid trees and long grass and a small pond, which was once the swimming pool. Immediately south of the house are two small gardens: a white garden and a new sloping spring garden, which has been designed by a student from KLC College of Garden Design.

There is much to appreciate at Long Barn and yes, one can play the game of looking for features that seem to anticipate Sissinghurst – but the garden here deserves so much more than that. Pocketed in the Wealden countryside, it creates its own psychological micro-climate. □

USEFUL INFORMATION

Open for pre-arranged private group tours only. Please email lemoniul@mac.com for further information.

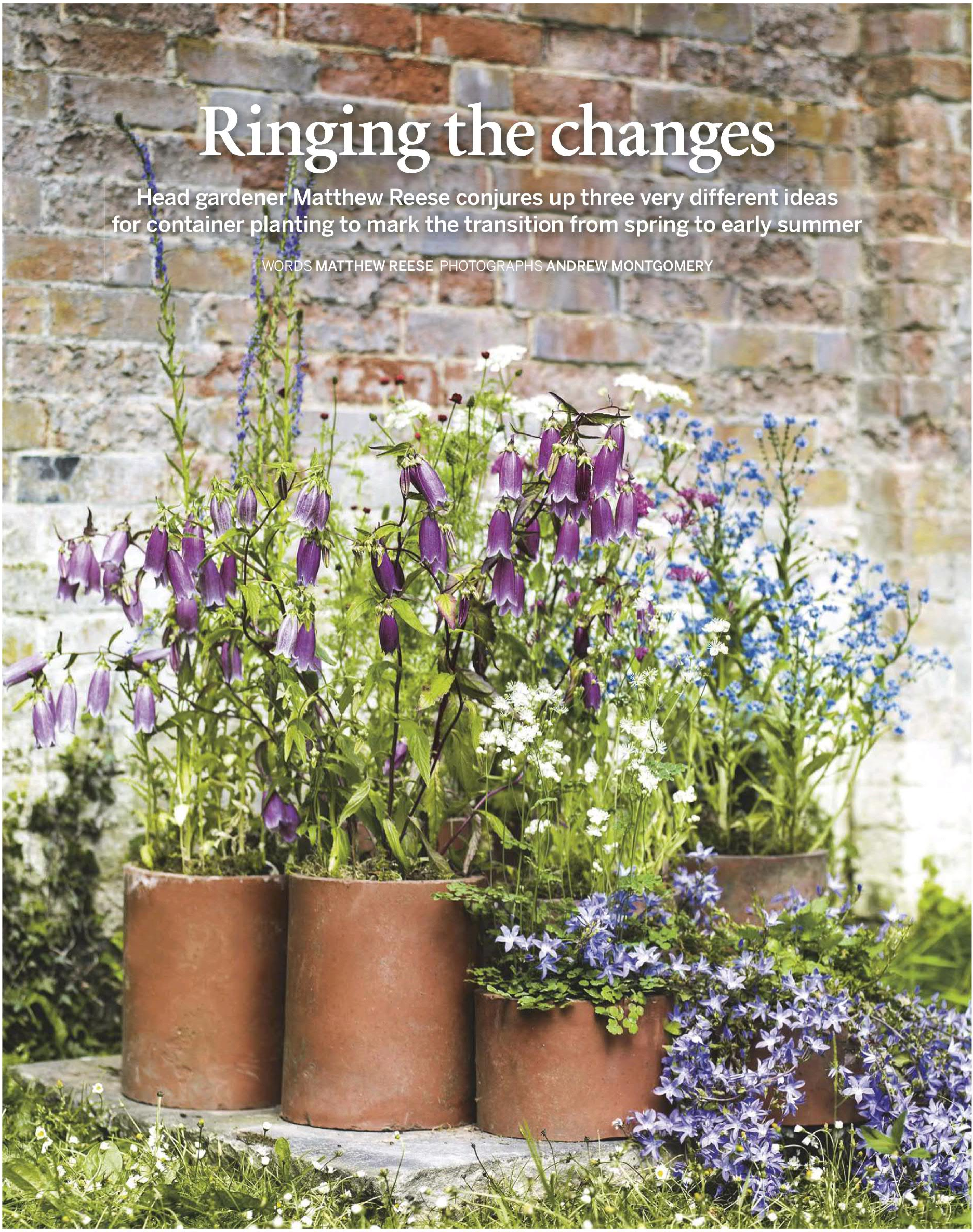
Magenta penstemons and blue nigella combine to create a cottage-garden feel within a relatively complex garden layout.

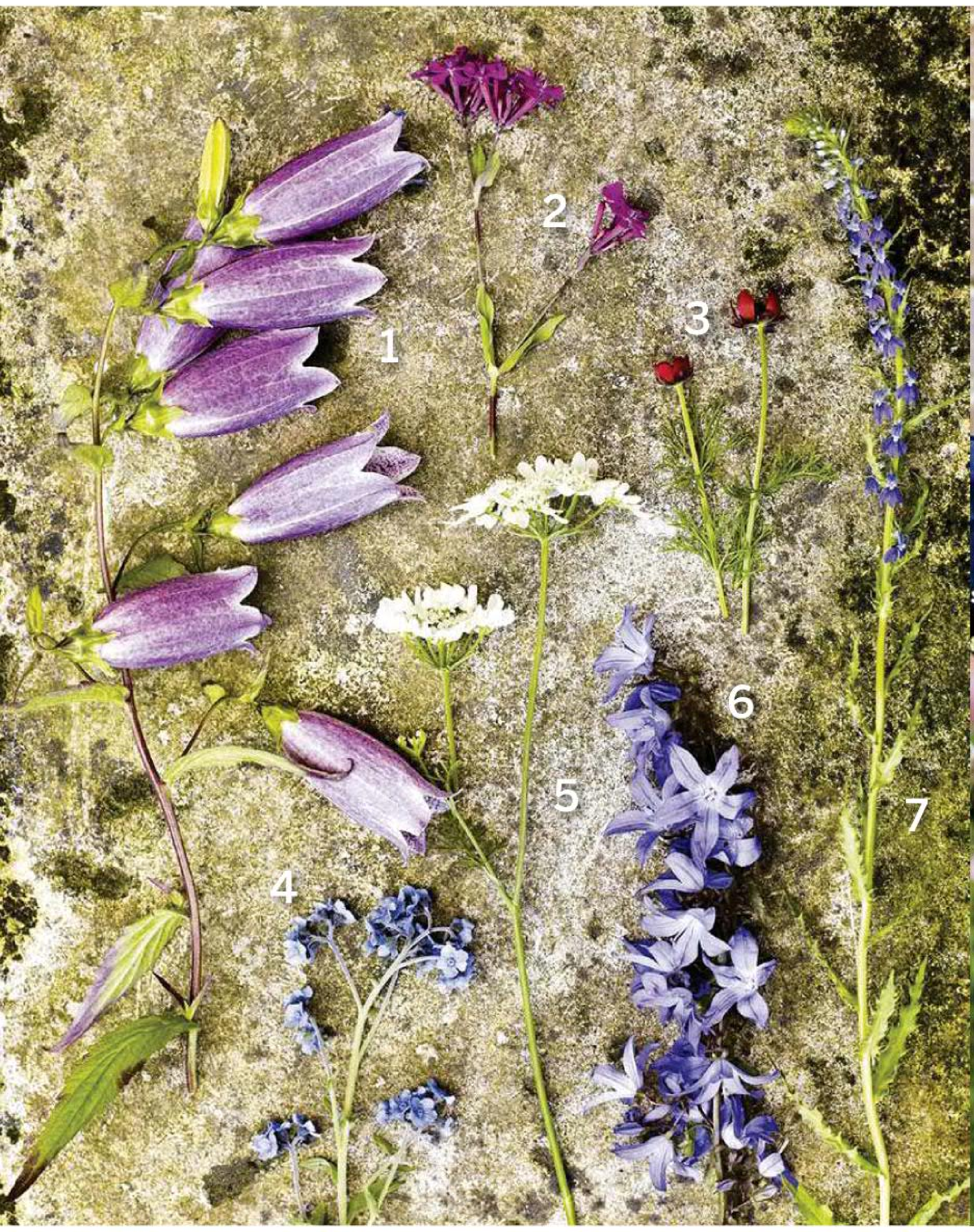
Vita and Harold decided to keep this orchard to retain some of the Kentish spirit of the original smallholding.

Ringing the changes

Head gardener Matthew Reese conjures up three very different ideas for container planting to mark the transition from spring to early summer

WORDS **MATTHEW REESE** PHOTOGRAPHS **ANDREW MONTGOMERY**





Pipe dreams

A friend of mine, who was clearing out his shed, gave me these sections of old drainage pipe. They're the perfect disguise for ordinary black-plastic, three-litre pots, lodging snugly into the top and remaining steadfast even when the compost is wet and heavy. Most of the plants in this arrangement have been grown from seed, apart from the procumbent *Campanula poscharskyana* and the *Thalictrum tuberosum*, which I bought. Overall the feel of the composition is somewhat wild and includes a few new plants that I wanted to get to know better before I use them in the garden. I've top-dressed the soil surface with sphagnum moss.

How to achieve the look

Cultivation and care

The showiest plant in this arrangement is *Campanula punctata* f. *rubriflora*, with its long pendant, rose-purple bellflowers held on loose spikes. At the back are the slender spines of *Lobelia fenestralis*, a plant that is new to me. It favours warmer climes but has such a lovely fine habit I thought it worth a try. Another first, is the beautifully named, pheasant's eye (*Adonis aestivalis*), which I've wanted to grow for some time. Its flowers are a glossy blood red and foliage is a fresh green, it has a branching habit and I love it. The flowers close at night and in dull weather, but this doesn't bother me. Next year I might combine it in the garden with the blue *Hackelia floribunda* at the back right of this vignette. This is a very easy annual, although the seeds are devils to get off clothing. Next to this, the chalky white umbels of *Orlaya grandiflora*, the bright-pink catchfly, *Silene armeria*, and near the front, the diminutive white meadow rue *Thalictrum tuberosum* (not shown above). Trailing over the edge on to the York stone, is the violet-blue bellflower *Campanula poscharskyana*.

Container

To make the whole display more appealing I cut the clay pipes into various lengths with a diamond-bladed circular saw. The pipes are arranged on a York stone slab and the plastic pots shoehorned into the top of each tube.

Plants (see above left)

1 *Campanula punctata* f. *rubriflora*
Perennial with darker freckling on the inside of the flowers. Deadheading prolongs display. 40cm.

2 *Silene armeria*
Hardy annual. For larger plants sow in autumn to flower in June. 40cm.

3 *Adonis aestivalis*
Hardy annual, known as pheasant's eye. Sow January – March. 50cm.

4 *Hackelia floribunda*
Hardy annual with many flowers. Sow February – March. 60cm. USDA 3a-7b[†].

5 *Orlaya grandiflora*
Hardy annual. Sow fresh seed in late September, overwinter in cold frame, and plant out in March. 50cm.

6 *Campanula poscharskyana*
Spreading perennial with violet-blue flowers. 20cm. USDA 3a-9b.

7 *Lobelia fenestralis*
A newly introduced perennial native to southern USA and Mexico. 1m.

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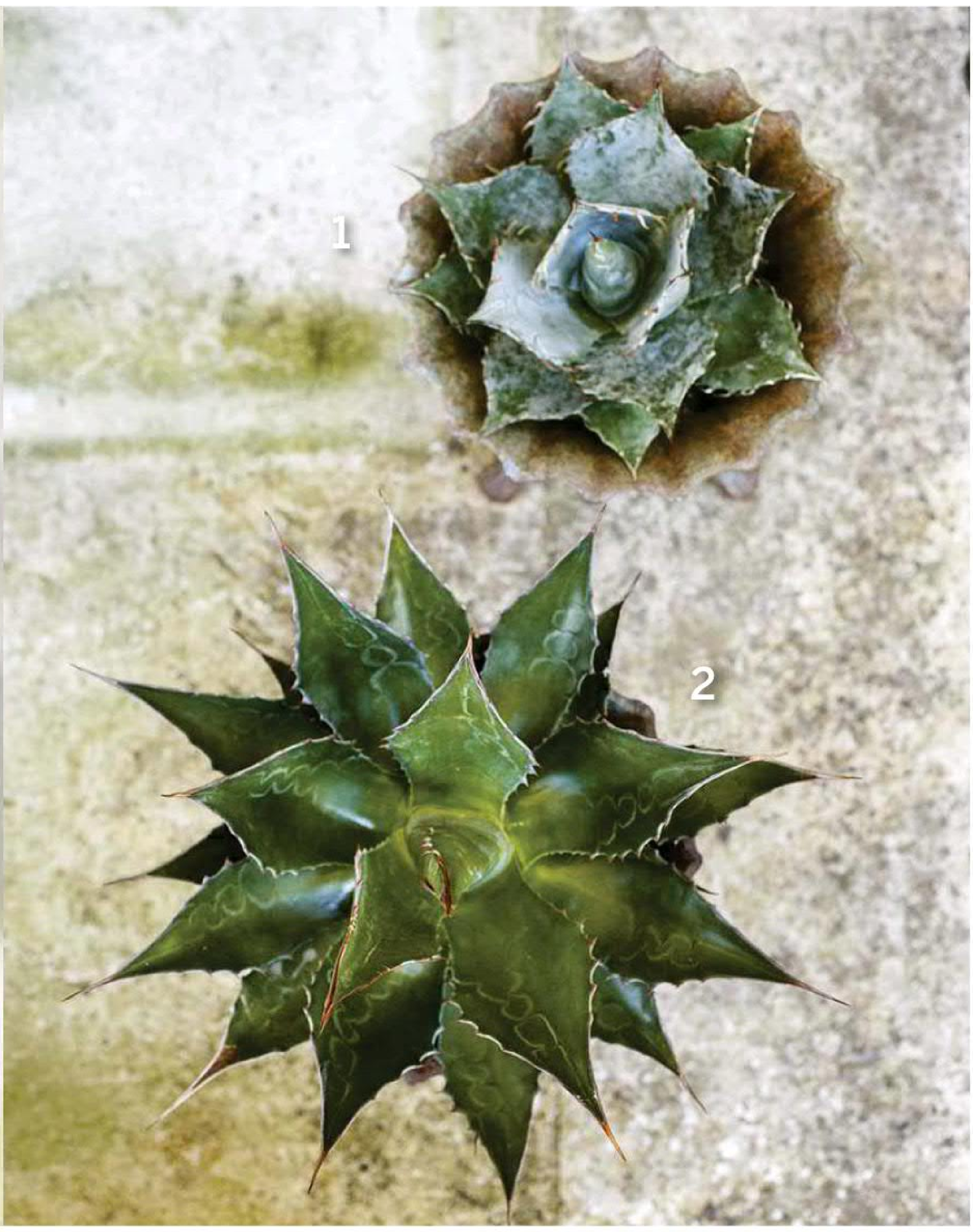
*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. [†] Hardiness ratings given where available.



Star urns

I bought this small pair of campana urns from an antique shop in Berkshire. I had seen similar ones before but not with the small lion paws on each corner of the base; this made them a little bit special. I decided to plant them up with a pair of agaves I'd bought in Cornwall – an *Agave parrasana* and a larger *A. montana*. I like the sculptural qualities of these agave rosettes, which are horribly beautiful. From above, their fierce leaves are arranged in an ordered spiral pattern that is reminiscent of an unfurling rosebud, but each muscular leaf of the *Agave montana* is armed with the sharpest needle-like points and spines reminiscent of sharks' teeth.

How to achieve the look

Cultivation and care

Agaves make excellent pot plants as they have a relatively small root system and are able to withstand long periods of drought. The golden rule for most is to make sure they never sit with wet roots, particularly during the cooler months. I use a John Innes No2 and a sharp horticultural grit mixture at 50:50 ratio. I also put extra grit in the base of the urns for the extra sharp drainage. Wearing thick leather gloves – it's important you use proper protection when potting agaves – centre the plant in the middle of the urn with one hand and then feed compost around it with your other hand. Use the end of a cane, which can get between the fierce leaves where fingers can't reach, to force the substrate home and make sure there are no air-pockets in the compost. In the winter I put my agaves into a cool greenhouse and don't water them until spring. However, they do like to go out in late spring and will respond to the higher UV levels with better-coloured foliage and spines, but do beware of killer cold, wet weather.

Container

These Victorian urns are made from heavy cast iron, and I like the way the blue-green colour marries with the glaucous leaves of the agaves. Agaves have a contemporary air and make an interesting combination with the classically styled urns.

Plants

1 ***Agave parrasana***

Known as the cabbage agave, this is a slow-growing agave that grows to a diameter of around 60cm. It comes from the mountain slopes of Mexico, and is found between elevations of 1,000m and 3,000m. 60cm. AGM*. USDA 8b-10b.

2 ***Agave montana***

The mountain agave is one of the most hardy agaves. It hails from the mountains of northeastern Mexico (at altitudes to 3,000m) where it can grow up to 1m in diameter. 1.3m. USDA 7b-10b.

Old flames

I like to think I rescued this oblong oak box from being swallowed up by an advancing sea of blackthorn. It's one of several trough boxes I discovered languishing by a friend's hedge, and I'd coveted them for quite a while before I finally asked my friend if I could sell them on his behalf. That was six years ago. Fortunately, I've yet to find a buyer and have been looking after them ever since. Over the years the oak has mellowed to a soft woody-grey and spots of lichen have started to appear, giving them a comfortable, aged look that makes it easier to position them in the garden. I have planted this one with, *Papaver commutatum* and mulched with picked lavender flowers to hide the dark soil.

How to achieve the look

Cultivation and care

Even though the flowers last only a few days at most, they are produced in such profusion that these poppies earn their keep for more than six weeks. They were sown in the autumn and held as rosettes in a cold frame. The key is not to let them get too wet during the winter. I planted them out in late March, spacing them every 20cm in a loam-based compost with added coarse grit to encourage good drainage. When planting I take extra care because they are quite fragile and can snap clean off at soil level if not handled gently enough. But once established, all they really need is regular watering and some support by way of a few small pea sticks.

Container

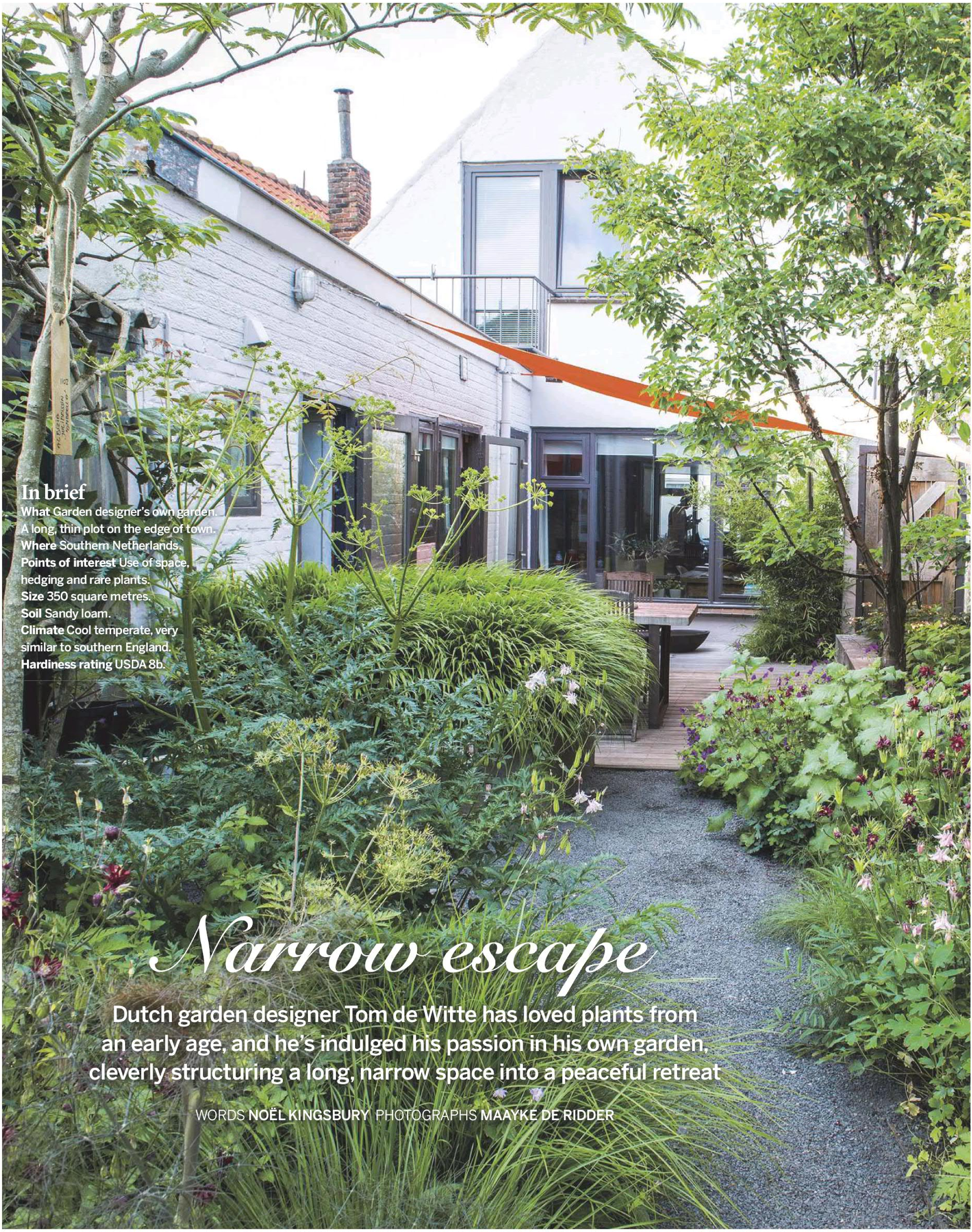
The box, one of several similar-sized troughs, has been hewn out of rough, sawn oak and then joined with wooden pegs. They are basically rustic window boxes with two feet on the base that hold the body off the ground. They are lined with a zinc planting box, which separates the wet compost from the oak, helping to stop it from rotting. In the past we have used them atop a wall, but here we have put it on a gravel path next to a flower bed.

Plant

1 *Papaver commutatum*
A hardy annual poppy that can self sow. 40cm. AGM. RHS H5.

Suppliers

- **Desert to Jungle** Tel 01823 443701, deserttojungle.com
- **Dove Cottage Nursery** dovecottagenursery.co.uk
- **Hardy's Cottage Garden Plants** Tel 01256 896533, hardys-plants.co.uk
- **Lower Kenneggy** Tel 01736762959, lowerkenneggynurseries.co.uk
- **Pan-Global Plants** Tel 01452 741641, panglobalplants.com
- **Plants of Distinction** Tel 01449711005, plantsofdistinction.co.uk
- **Special Plants** Tel 01225 891686, specialplants.net



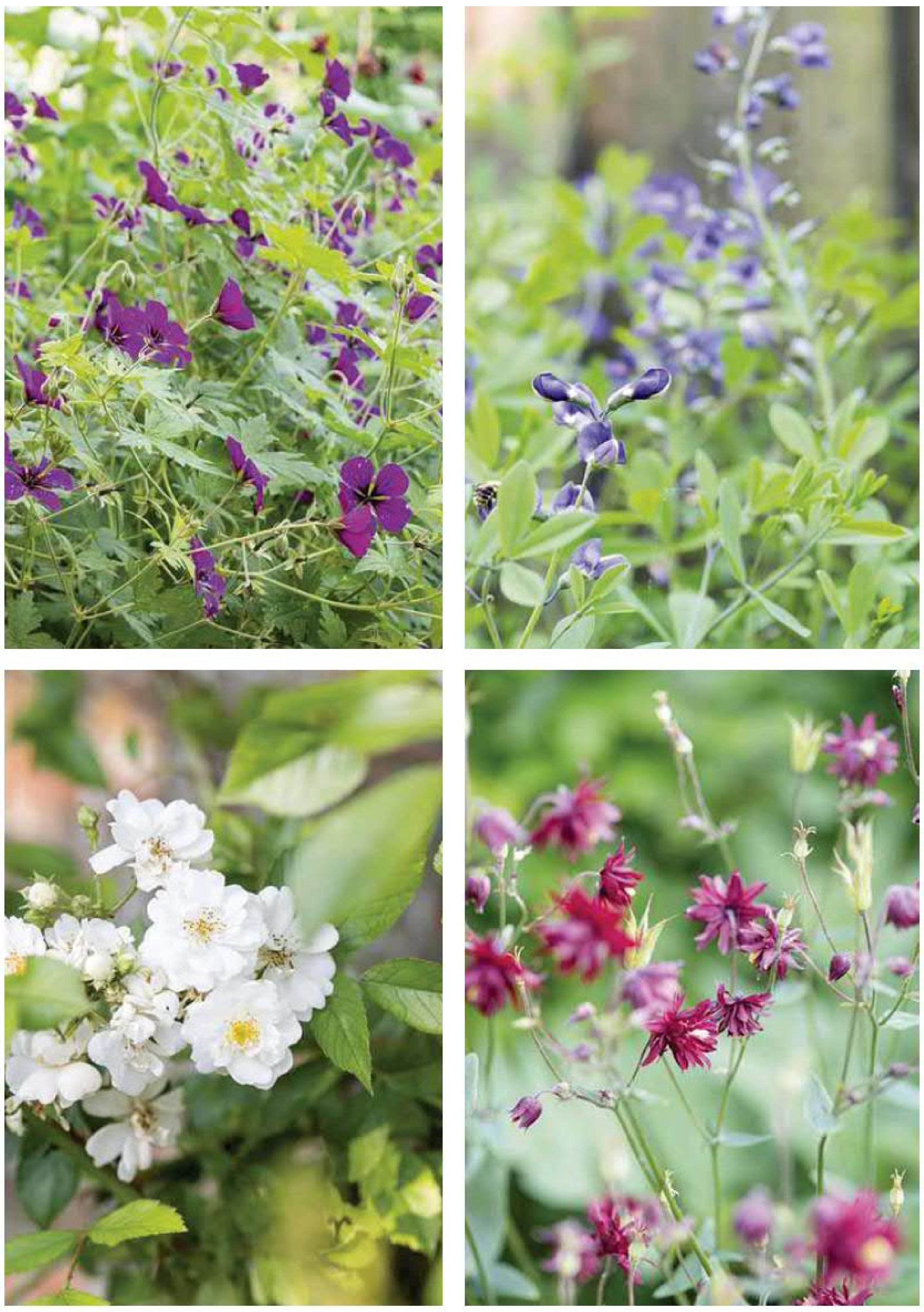
Narrow escape

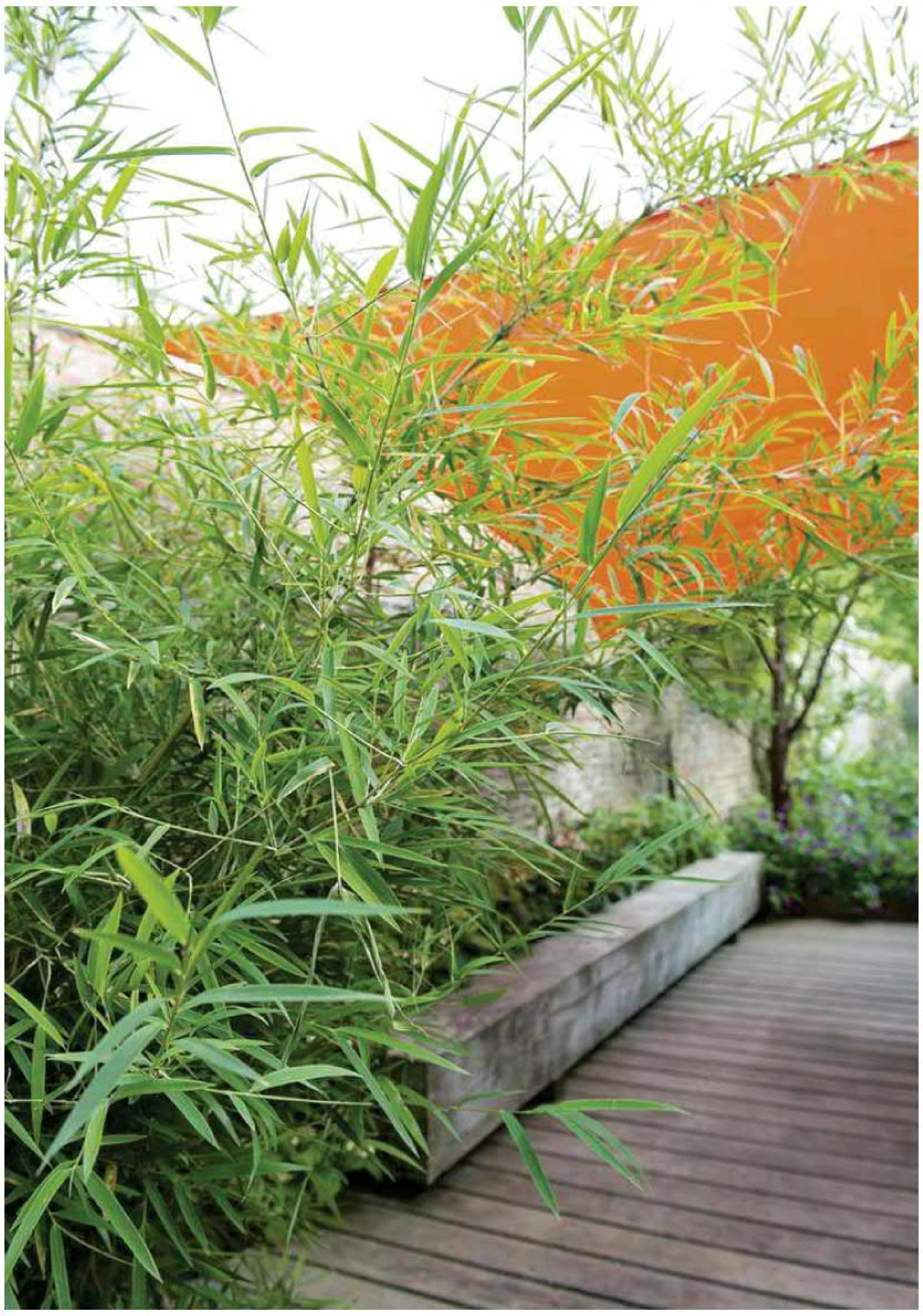
Dutch garden designer Tom de Witte has loved plants from an early age, and he's indulged his passion in his own garden, cleverly structuring a long, narrow space into a peaceful retreat

WORDS **NOËL KINGSBURY** PHOTOGRAPHS **MAAYKE DE RIDDER**

In brief

What Garden designer's own garden. A long, thin plot on the edge of town.
Where Southern Netherlands.
Points of interest Use of space, hedging and rare plants.
Size 350 square metres.
Soil Sandy loam.
Climate Cool temperate, very similar to southern England.
Hardiness rating USDA 8b.





THIS IMAGE Tom has played to the garden's strengths by planting against boundary walls and creating four distinct areas linked by a meandering path.

PLANT IMAGES (clockwise, from top left) The rich planting palette includes: ***Geranium*** 'Anne Thomson', ***Baptisia australis; Aquilegia vulgaris*** var. ***stellata*** 'Nora Barlow' and the climbing rose 'Guirlande d'Amour'.

RIGHT The bamboo ***Chusquea culeou*** 'Tenuis' flourishes in a shady spot near the house.

ABOVE The handsome umbel *Molopospermum peloponnesiacum* brings height and drama to this border.

PLANT IMAGES (above, clockwise from top left) The pretty pinks and purple tones of *Astrantia major* 'Roma', *Geranium* x *monacense*, *Allium schubertii* and *Salvia verticillata* 'Purple Rain' work well with the predominance of greens in the garden.

Tom de Witte has been a keen gardener since he was young. "I have been familiar with planting plans since I was 12," he says. "A couple of months after I got my driving licence, I borrowed my mum's car and drove to Hummelo to meet Piet Oudolf. It was a three-hour drive, so it was quite a journey for me." A career in gardening seemed inevitable, and Tom now runs a well-established garden design business with fellow designer Corinne Lecluyse.

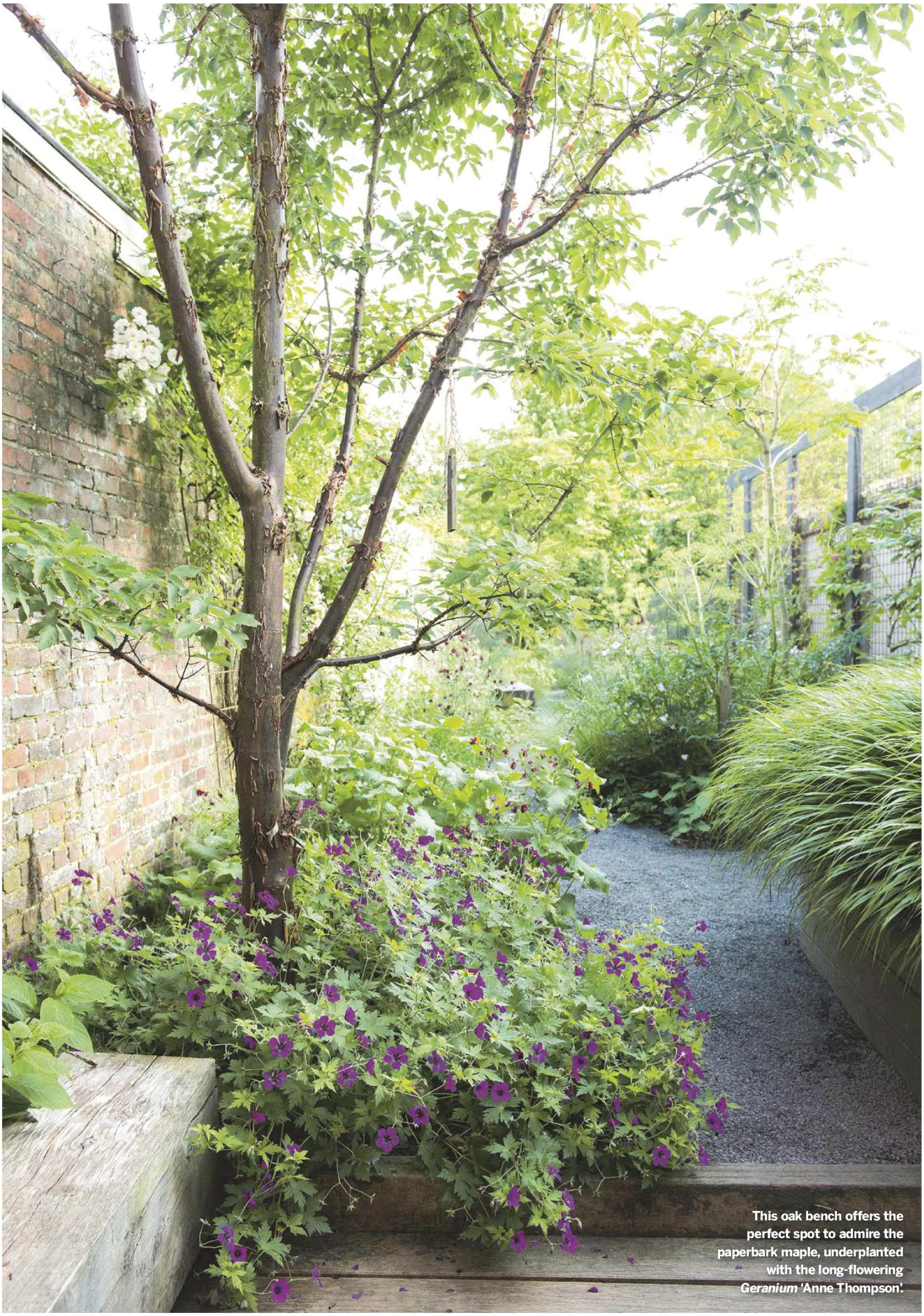
Tom's own garden is in a small town in Zeeland, very near the Belgian border. It occupies a long, narrow strip, averaging about four metres wide – an awkward shape but one that allows for sub division and the creation of different zones, each of which has its own special atmosphere. "The garden has an *Alice in Wonderland* feel," comments Maayke de Ridder, who photographed this feature, "because each segment is small but seems larger than it actually is."

The area immediately outside the house has a small terrace that overlooks a lush green planting with several young trees: *Acer griseum*, the rowan *Sorbus sargentiana* and silk tree *Albizia julibrissin*, all chosen because they are compact and provide year-round interest. As Tom explains, "The acer has wonderful bark, the sorbus has flowers and berries, and the albizia has a touch of the tropics."

The planting style here is distinctly naturalistic, with several grasses and members of the cow parsley family, both of which strongly suggest natural habitats, even though they may not necessarily be north European natives. This natural approach is emphasised by the solid oak benches Tom has installed for seating.

The rear of the garden is not dissimilar, although it is more shaded. "There are trees growing in a cemetery behind," says Tom, "so it is quite shaded, but having them enables me to 'borrow' some landscape." Paving with relatively wide spacing filled with gravel creates a clearly defined central area. This part of the garden is reached ▷

> *The planting style here is distinctly naturalistic, with several grasses and members of the cow parsley family, both of which strongly suggest natural habitats*



This oak bench offers the perfect spot to admire the paperbark maple, underplanted with the long-flowering *Geranium* 'Anne Thompson'.

Tom with his business partner Corinne Lecluyse who helped in the design of Tom's garden.

The end is reached through two contrasting zones, one dominated by beech hedging, the second by naturalistic grassy planting

▷ through two contrasting zones, one dominated by beech hedging and the second by naturalistic grassy planting. The hedged area is very different in character from the rest of the garden: ascetic, even severe, the rectangular green blocks preventing a sight line through.

"You go in, but you do not know what is at the other end, so you are invited to explore," says Tom. "This part is meant to be contemplative, a link between the flowery first part and the flowery next part of the garden – I like the idea of the *coulisse*." A *coulisse* is one of the flat pieces of scenery at the side of a stage in a theatre, or the gap between the scenery panels where actors can make entrances or exits. Drama builds expectation.

Narrow gardens will have a high ratio of boundary to area, so climbers are important. Some of the climbing plants here are what might be expected, such as the rose 'Guirlande d'Amour'; others are rather daring, such as *Ampelopsis megalophylla*, which can be found clambering up a trellis. This rarely seen grape relative has huge divided leaves. Tom notes, "It will grow enormous but I prune it hard. I grow it because the foliage is so good and it has interesting fruit too."

Another rarity is the tree *Tetradium daniellii*, which can be found in the lower, shaded garden. It too has divided foliage and the additional virtue of flowering in August and September.

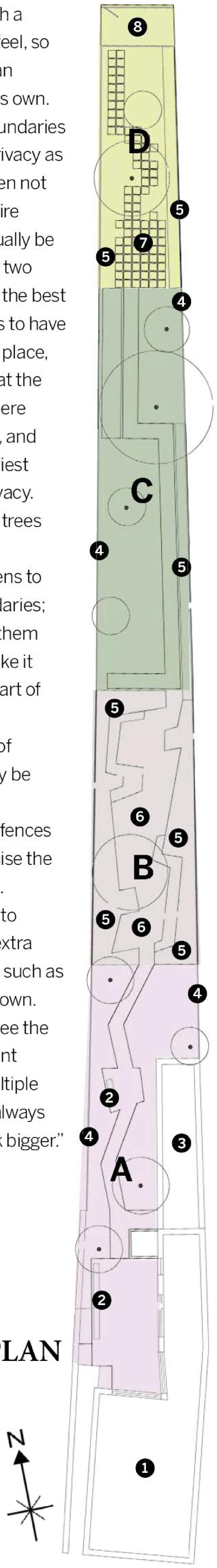
The demands of designing small gardens are very particular and can often be met by making this type of precise choice. Smaller plots deserve plantsman designers every bit as much as larger ones, as Tom's creation demonstrates. ☐

USEFUL INFORMATION

Tom de Witte Garden Design, Landstraat 18, 4527 CX Aardenburg, the Netherlands.
Tel +31 (0)11730 1288.
Website tomdewitte.nl

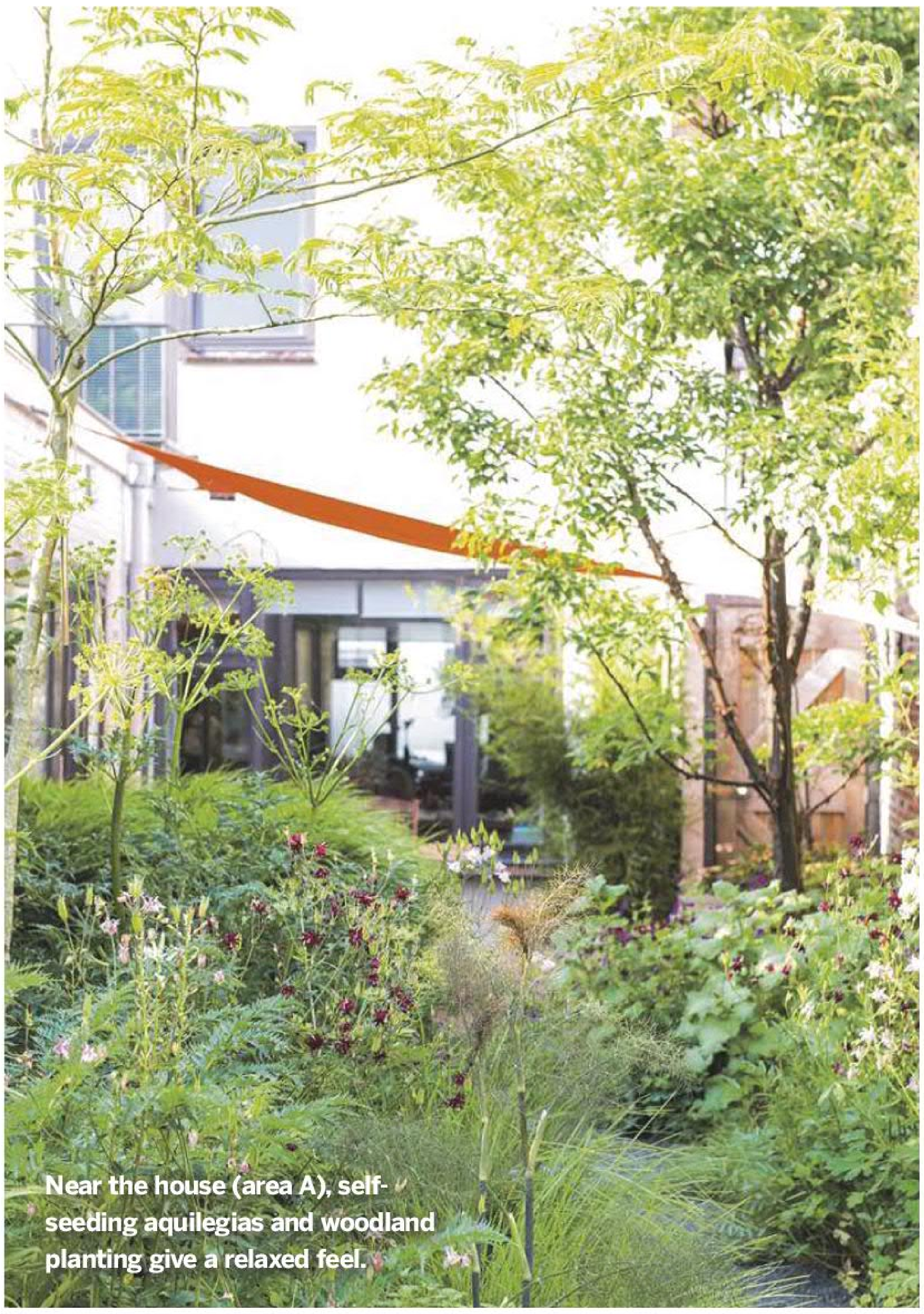
Making the most of a long, narrow garden

- Develop areas with a distinctly different feel, so that each one has an atmosphere all of its own.
- Make sure the boundaries provide as much privacy as possible. This is often not possible for the entire garden, but can usually be achieved for one or two small areas. One of the best ways of doing this is to have a sheltering seated place, such as an arbour, at the very end; getting there becomes a journey, and this is often the easiest place to ensure privacy.
- Make the most of trees and large shrubs in neighbouring gardens to help blur the boundaries; planting in front of them can sometimes make it look as if they are part of your property.
- The surface area of the boundaries may be substantial, so use climbers on higher fences and walls to maximise the area that is planted.
- Tom advises, "Try to create a couple of extra little places to stop, such as somewhere to sit down. They will help you see the garden from different angles and give multiple viewpoints, which always make a garden look bigger."

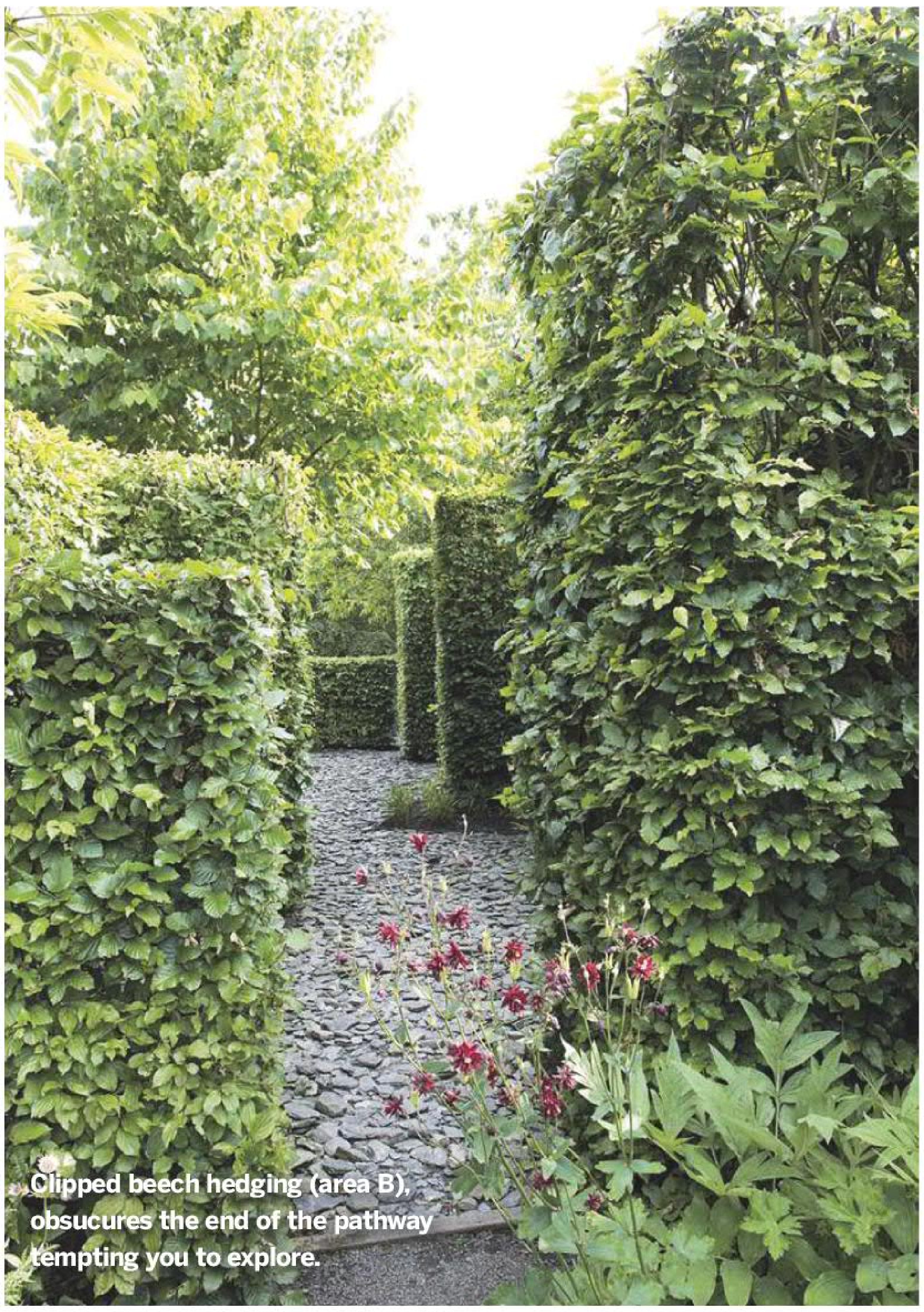


GARDEN PLAN

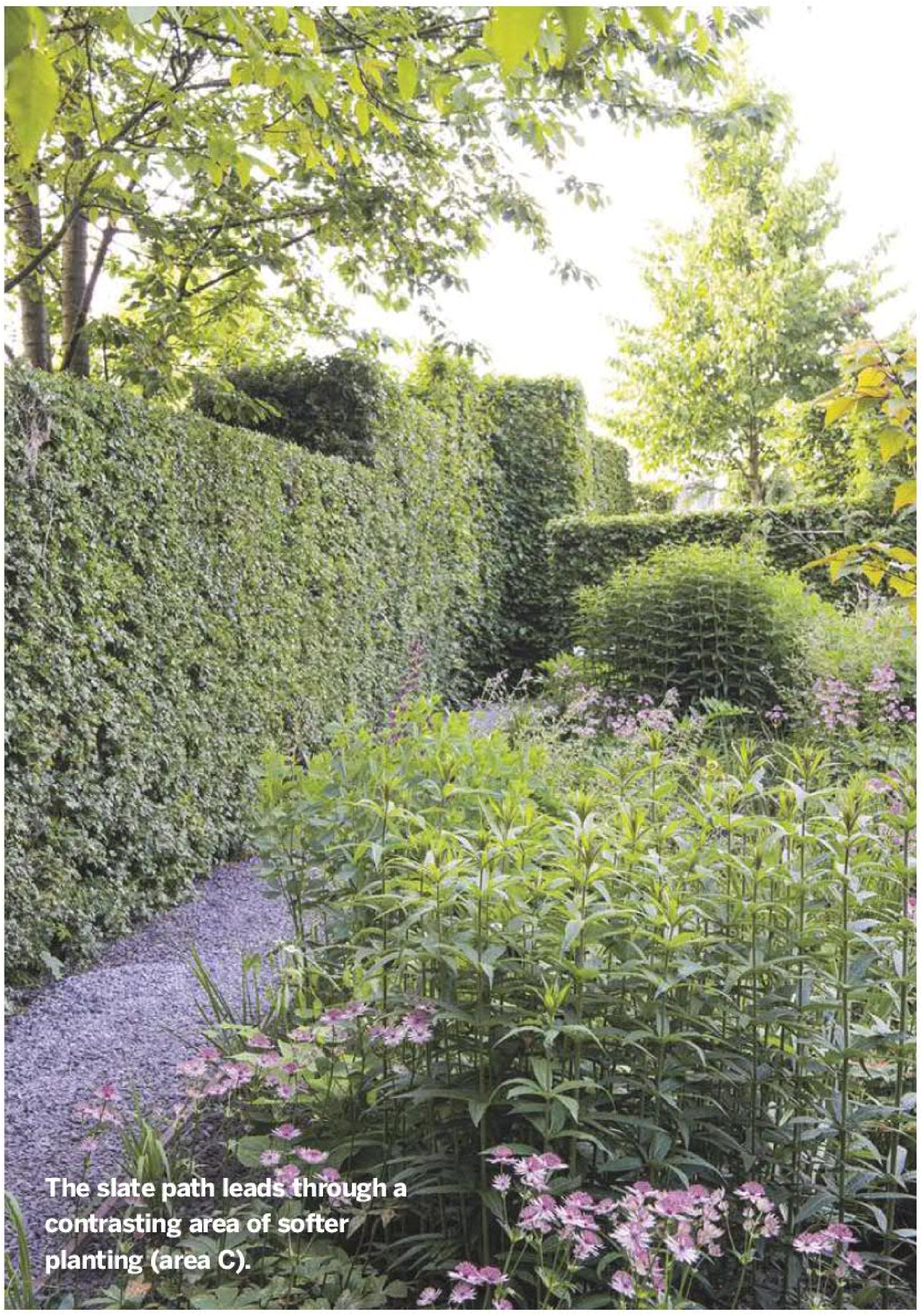
1 House
2 Wooden bench
3 Shed
4 Wooden fence
5 Hedges
6 Slate
7 Stone paving
8 Compost



Near the house (area A), self-seeding aquilegias and woodland planting give a relaxed feel.



Clipped beech hedging (area B), obsucures the end of the pathway tempting you to explore.



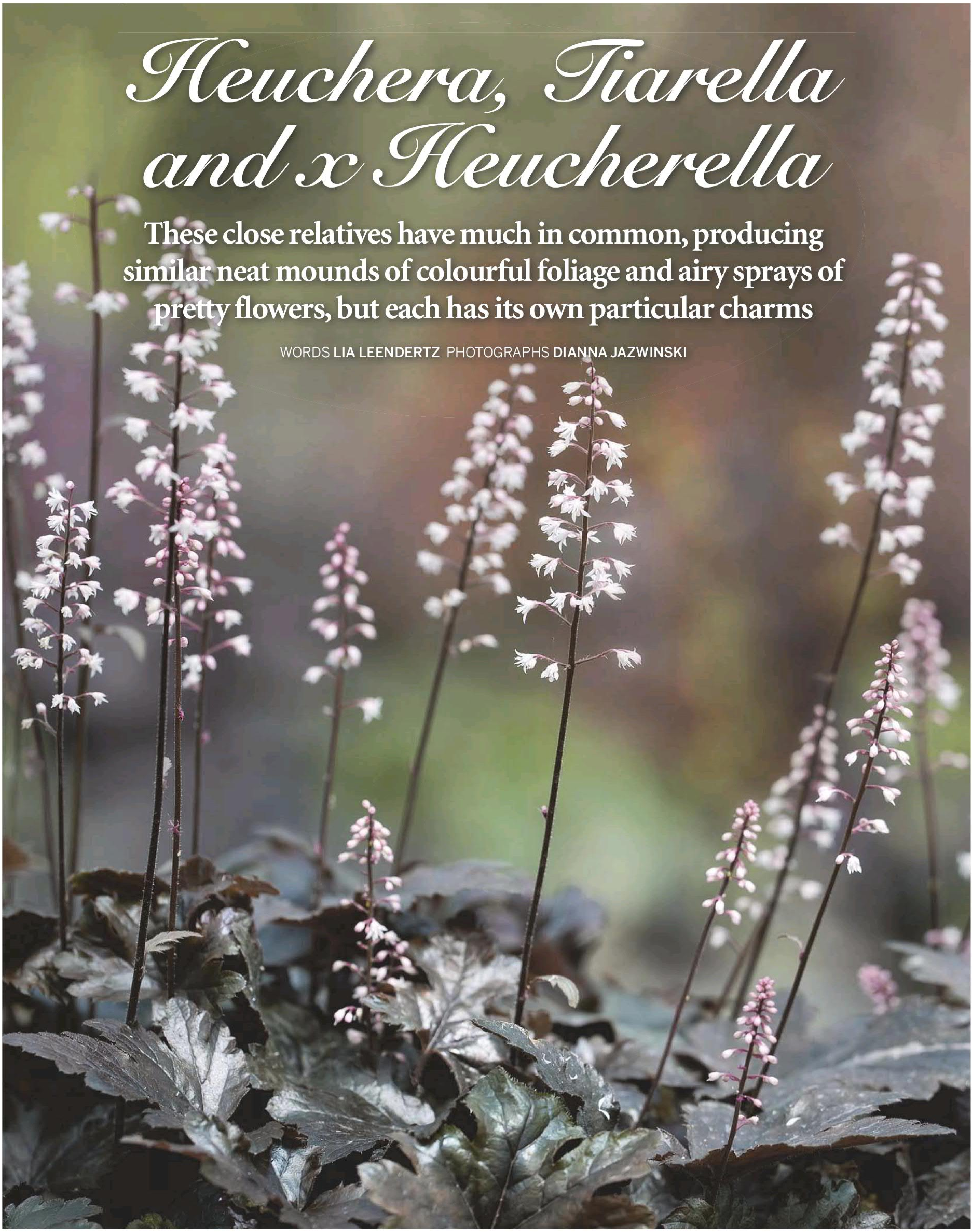
The slate path leads through a contrasting area of softer planting (area C).

The secluded far end of the garden (area D) features a bee-bee tree, ***Tetradium daniellii.***

Heuchera, Tiarella and x Heucherella

These close relatives have much in common, producing similar neat mounds of colourful foliage and airy sprays of pretty flowers, but each has its own particular charms

WORDS **LIA LEENDERTZ** PHOTOGRAPHS **DIANNA JAZWINSKI**



In brief

What Two closely related genera from the *Saxifragaceae* family, and the hybrid between them.
Origins All *Heuchera* are from North America, as are most *Tiarella*, with the exception of *T. polyphylla,* which ranges from Himilayas to China and Japan; x *Heucherella* is a garden hybrid of *Heuchera* and *Tiarella*.
Season Foliage all year round, with flowers appearing in spring.
Size Plants are generally low growing, with taller inflorescences. Most of the plants featured here have a foliage height and spread of between 15-40cm.
Conditions Well-drained soil, all are tolerant of shade.

x *Heucherella* 'Burnished Bronze' Loves a woodland position in dappled shade, and will often hold on to its foliage all winter. Produces a low mound of glossy, purple-brown leaves and sprays of light-pink flowers in spring. H 25cm. S 30cm*. USDA 4a-9b†.

Lia Leendertz is a garden writer, author, and allotmenteer who writes regularly for the *Guardian* and *Gardens Illustrated*.

With their colourful leaves, froths of spring flowers and compact nature, it is easy to see how one could get a little addicted to collecting heucheras and their close relatives, heucherellas and tiarellas. They hang on to their leaves throughout winter providing a welcome splash of colour right through the darkest months and are relatively easy going, happily thriving in part sun or part shade.

Of around 800 cultivars in cultivation, 400 are grown by Jooles Burton and her husband Sean on their aptly named one-acre nursery, Heucheraholics. "And there are more being introduced all the time," says Jooles, excitedly, suggesting that her collection is far from complete. Modern breeding is generally aimed at creating new cultivars with larger flowers or interesting foliage. "Most breeders are looking to create a plant with leaves that look really good for as long as possible," says Jooles. "The foliage is really the main reason for growing this group of plants so it is this that most breeders focus on. *Heuchera*, *Tiarella* and x *Heucherella* are mostly completely evergreen, providing some cover, all year round, and the colours are wonderful."

Her favourites for foliage are x *Heucherella* 'Gunsmoke' and *Heuchera* 'Spellbound', both of which have beautiful silvery leaves. "I'm particularly attracted to the plants that combine silver colouring with pink and purply tones, but really my favourite changes by the day. I love them all at different times."

Despite their great variety of colourings and markings, this is a group of plants that is relatively easy to place in the garden. They make excellent companions to other plants with good foliage, such as pulmonarias, ferns and hostas. Tiarellas in particular are edge-of-woodland plants, but all three genera are happiest in some shade. Jooles also likes to plant bulbs in among them. "The bulbs' flowers appear against the beautiful patterned foliage," she says. "And, after the ▷

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* H = height of foliage; S = Spread. †Hardiness ratings given where available.

▷ bulbs have flowered and their foliage is yellowing and dying back, the evergreen leaves of the *Heuchera* etc hide it."

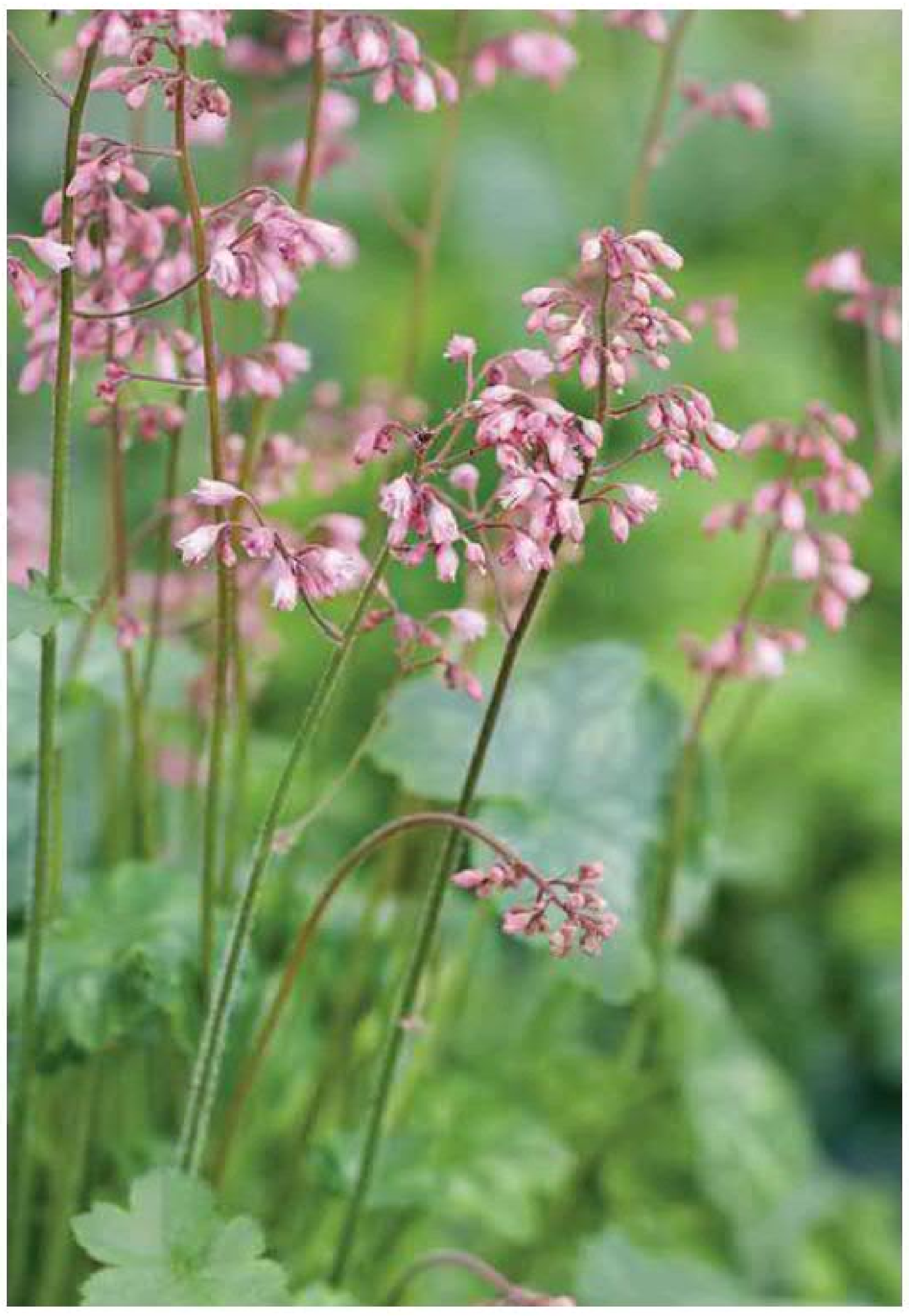
This brilliantly dependable foliage combined with their often compact habit also makes this group of plants great candidates for container planting. Some, such as 'Sweet Tart' and 'Peppermint' (both right), are extremely neat and look particularly good in pots. They also make a great alternative to short-term bedding plants. Others, including x *Heucherella* 'Redstone Falls' – with orangey red foliage – and x *Heucherella* 'Yellowstone Falls' – with lime-green leaves splashed with red (both page 83), look fabulous in hanging baskets.

Although it's the foliage that provides colour for much of the year this is only part of the story. In spring all three produce colourful flower spikes and many continue flowering for a long period of time. These inflorescences offer more than just tall, good looks; the flowers of both *Heuchera* and *Tiarella* are packed full of nectar and bees love them so they make a great addition to a wildlife garden. With *Tiarella*, in particular, the flowers are produced in great quantity; light and fluffy, like thousands of little stars. However, it's worth noting that as x *Heucherella*, are sterile hybrids they produce very little nectar, so if you're aiming to attract pollinators you should choose from the parent genera.

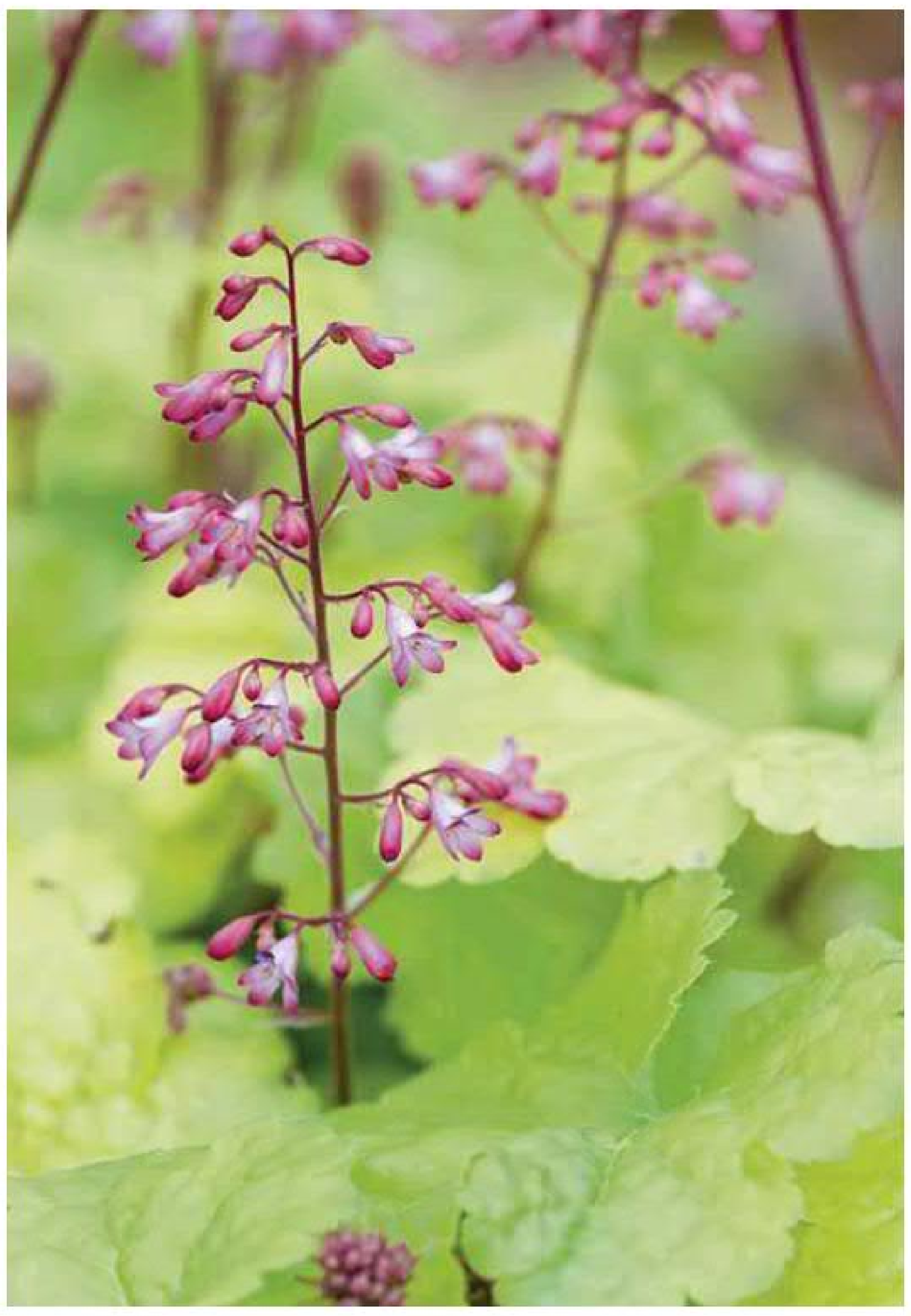
And there are some fabulous new plants appearing. Heucheraholics has recently introduced a new cross, *Heuchera* 'Pilley Pink' (see below right), which appeared as a seedling on the nursery around seven years ago. Jooles and Sean have named and propagated it since for its lovely fresh-green leaf, overlaid with silver, and its soft, rosy pink flowers.

These promiscuous plants – helped along by enthusiastic breeders – look set to keep on producing new crosses, and ever finer combinations of leaf colour, leaf markings, and flower colour and size. *Heuchera*, x *Heucherella* and *Tiarella* enthusiasts will never run out of plants to collect, but the rest of us can also make the most of their ability to provide splashes of vibrant or moody colour all year round.

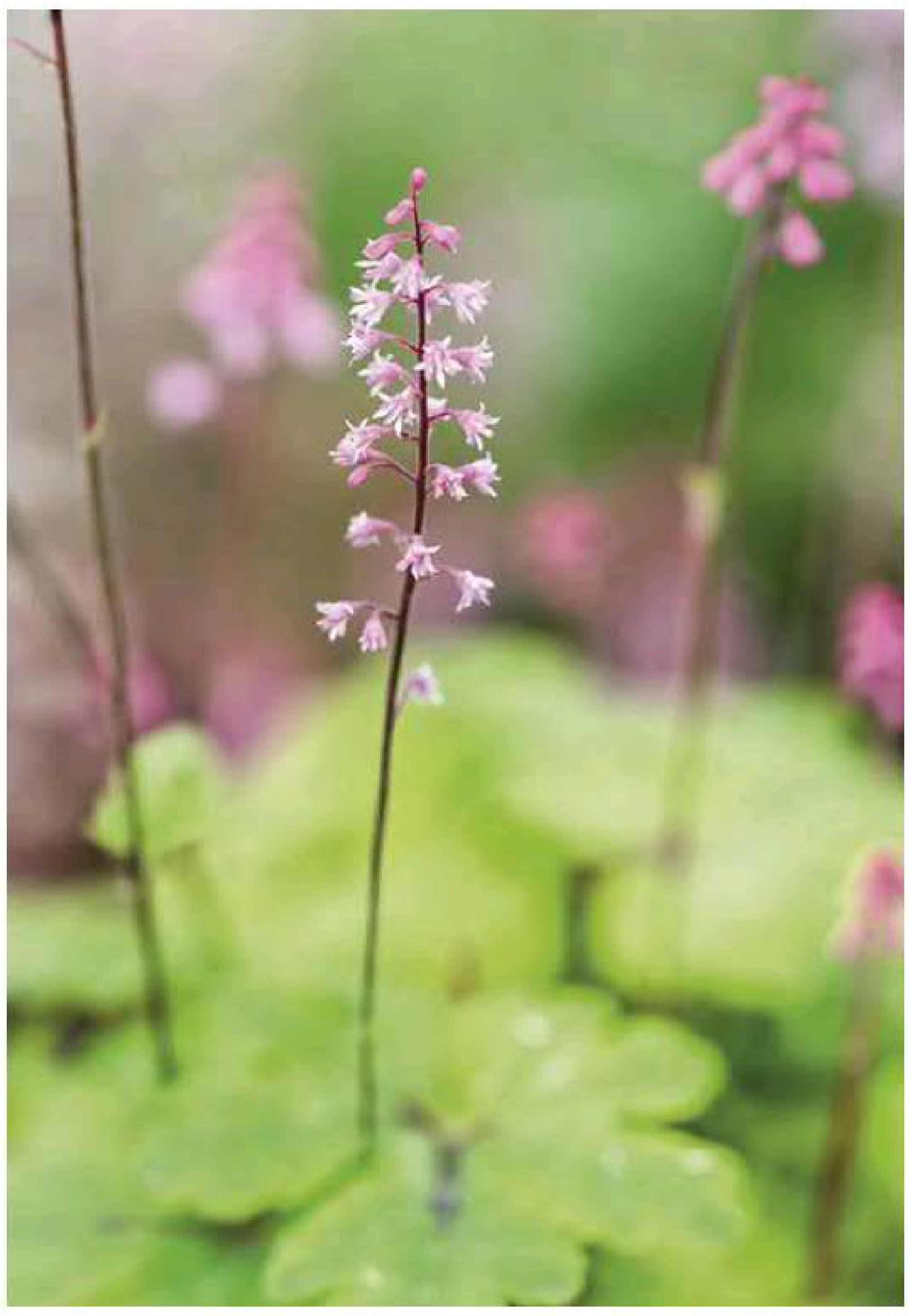
- Recommendations for *Heuchera*, *Tiarella* and x *Heucherella* continue over the next six pages.



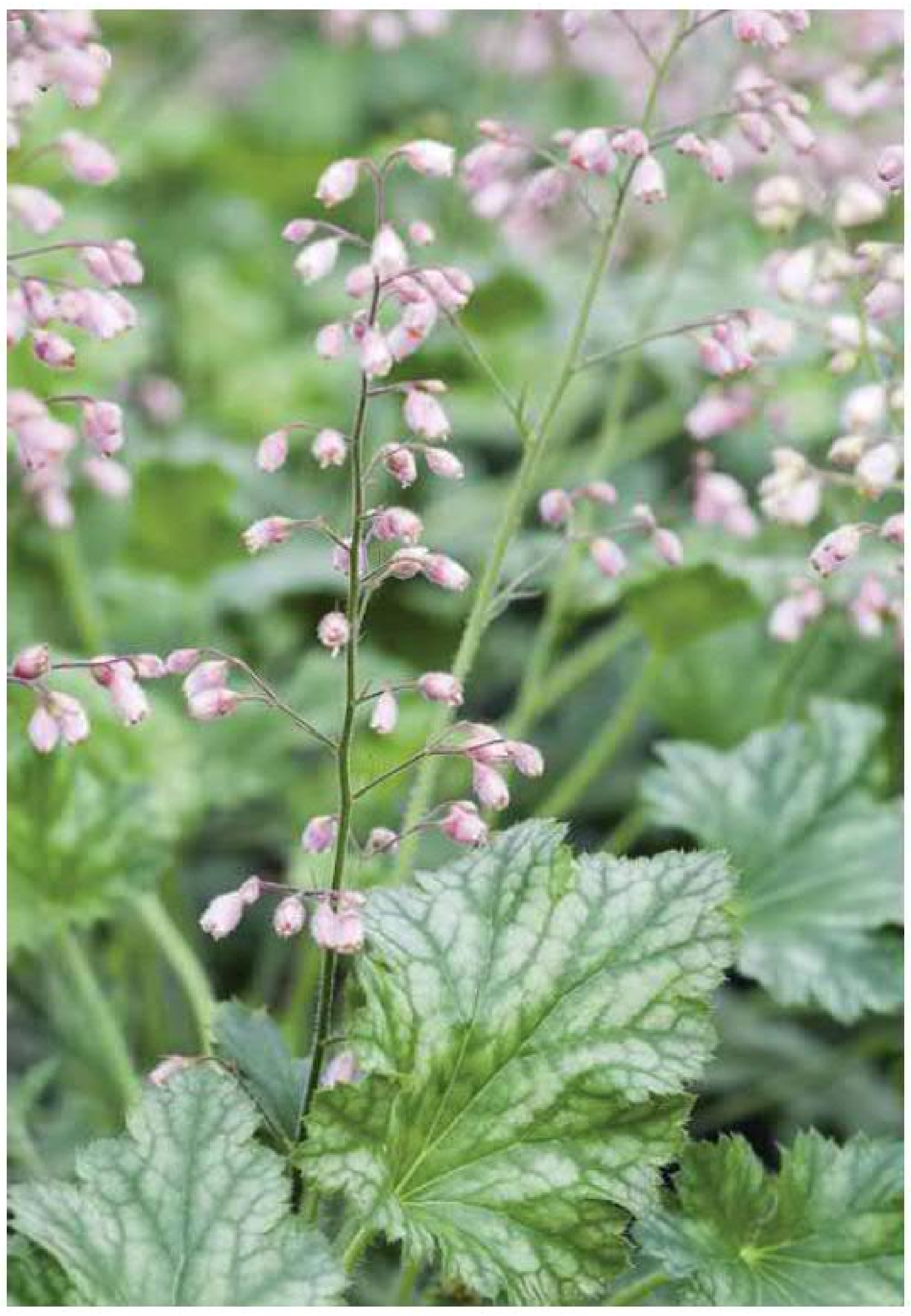
***H.* 'Peppermint'**
Particularly compact and tidy, this is a good choice for a container or a small space. It produces abundant soft, rose-pink flowers and has fresh-green foliage with a silvery veil. H 15cm. S 15cm. USDA 4a-9b.



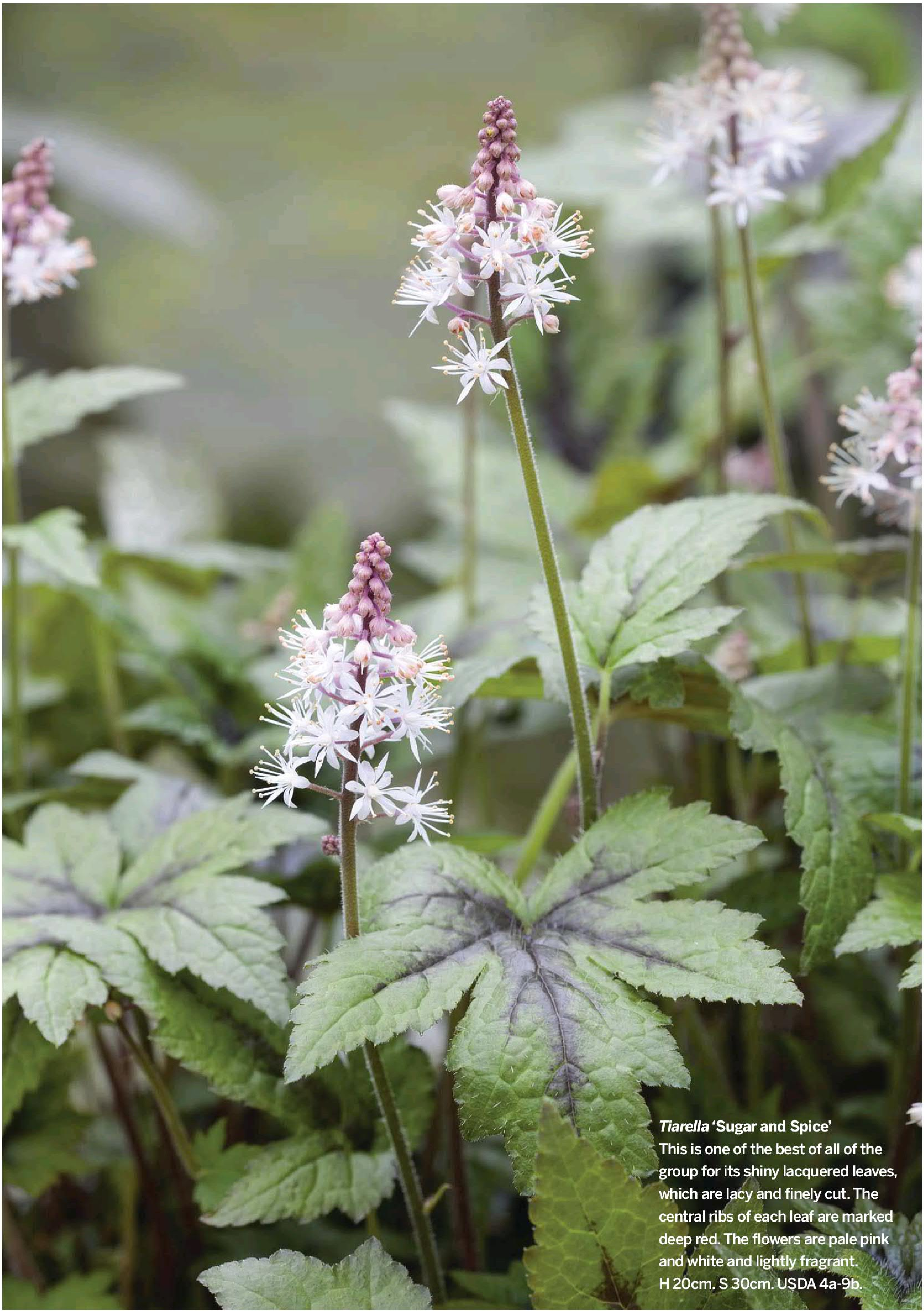
***H.* 'Sweet Tart'**
Has lime-green foliage that grows in a neat clump. Its bright colour and compact habit make it very useful for year-round colour in containers. Produces short, fat wands of cerise pink and light pink flowers. H 15cm. S 20cm.



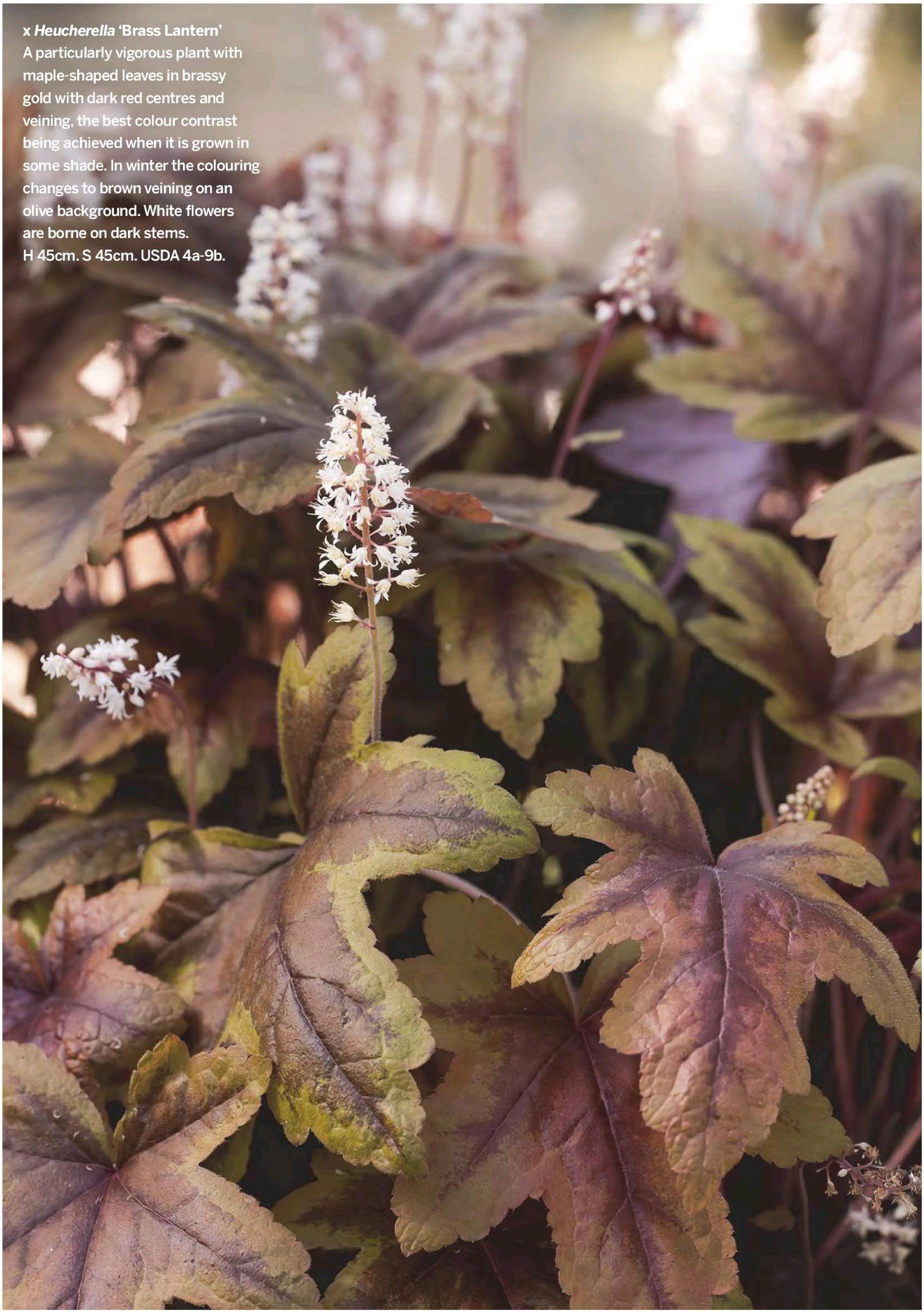
x *Heucherella* 'Dayglow Pink'
Deeply cut, maple-like leaves are green with a chocolate centre, and work well in a container with winter bedding plants. Mauve-pink flowers are 40cm tall and impressive, and borne in great quantity. H 20cm. S 45. USDA 4a-9b.



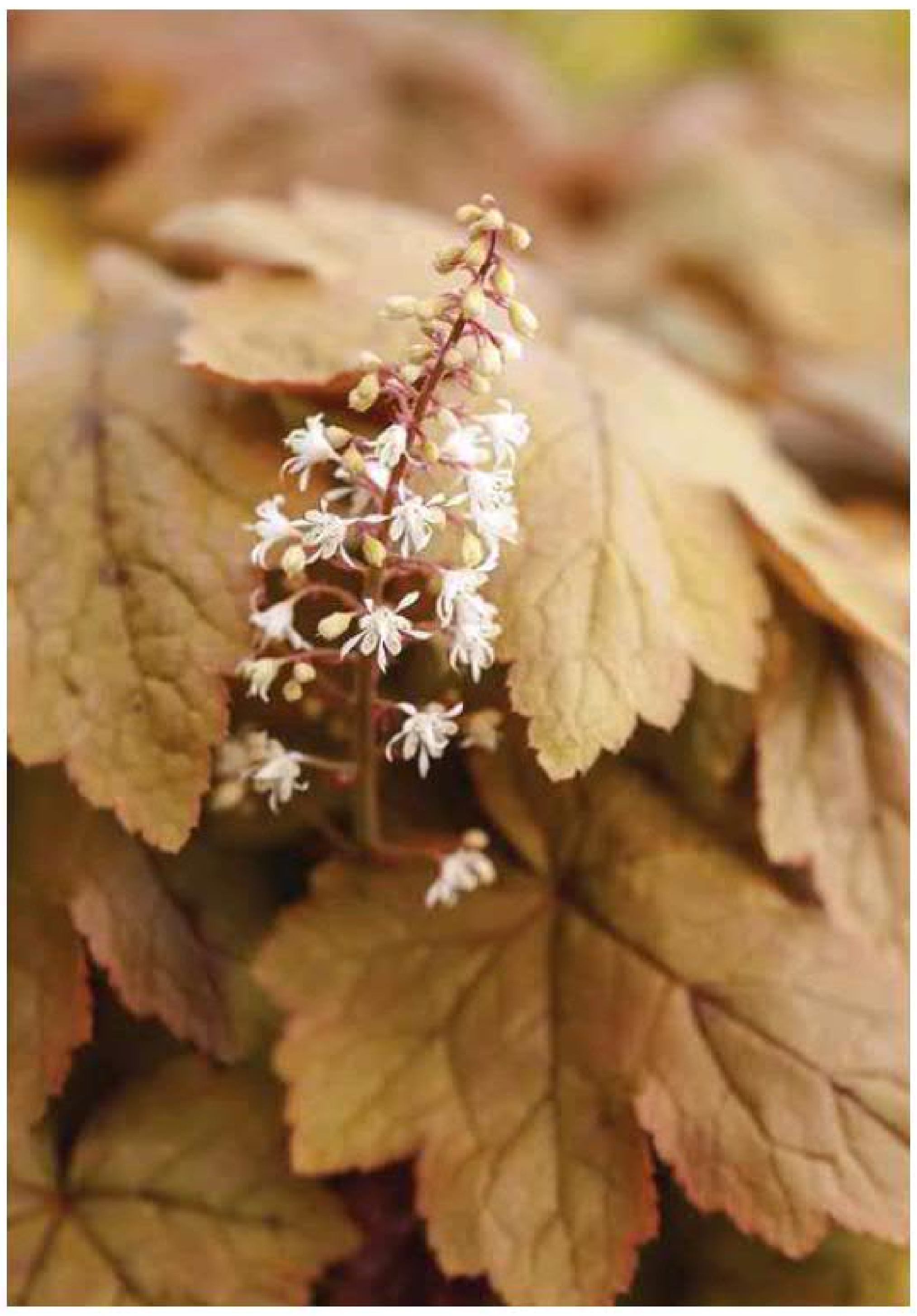
***H.* 'Pilley Pink'**
Heucheraholics's own cultivar, named here for the first time, appeared on the nursery as a chance seedling. Its fresh-green leaves are overlaid with silver and its flowers are soft-pink. H 30cm. S 30cm.



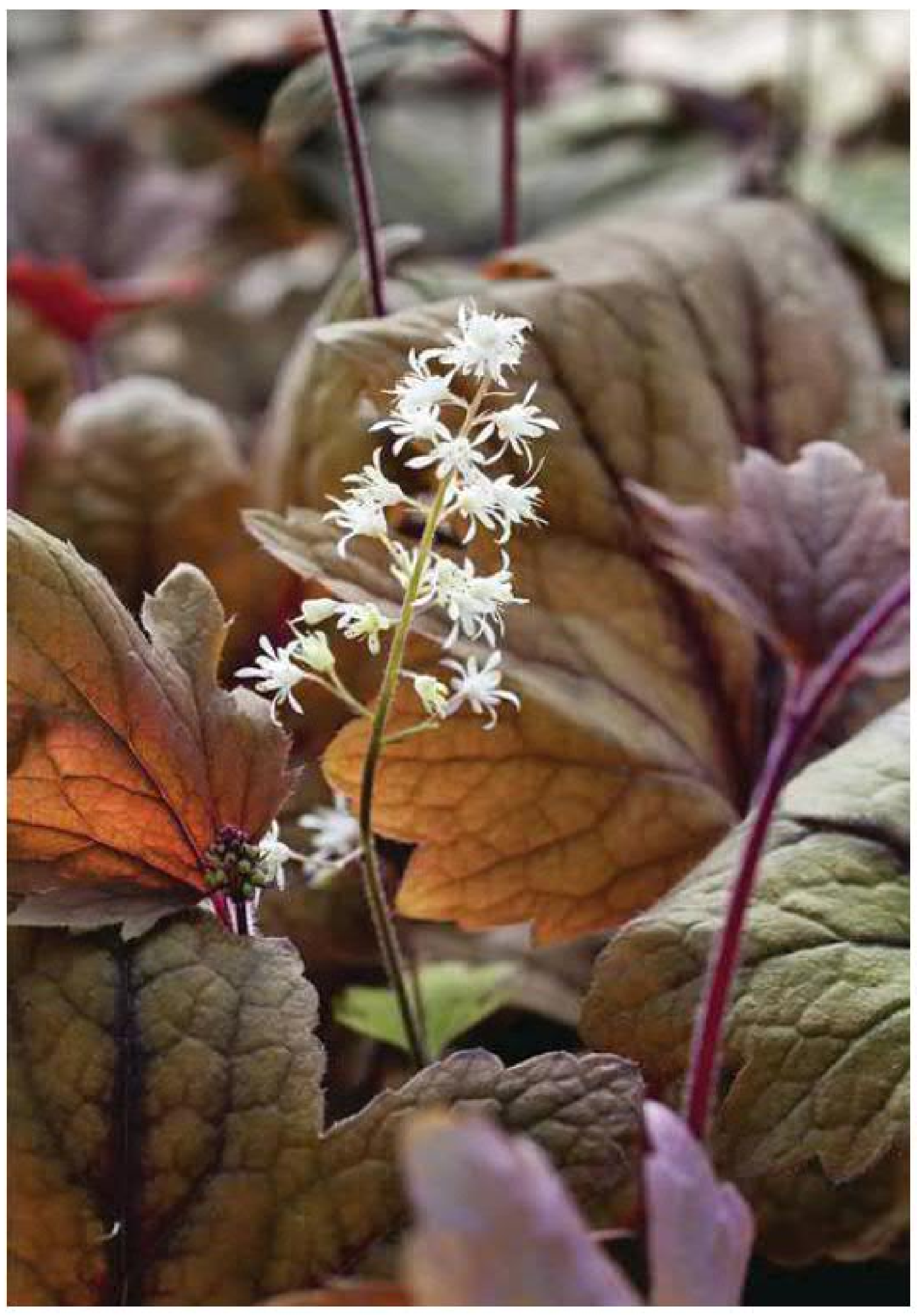
***Tiarella* 'Sugar and Spice'**
This is one of the best of all of the group for its shiny lacquered leaves, which are lacy and finely cut. The central ribs of each leaf are marked deep red. The flowers are pale pink and white and lightly fragrant.
H 20cm. S 30cm. USDA 4a-9b.



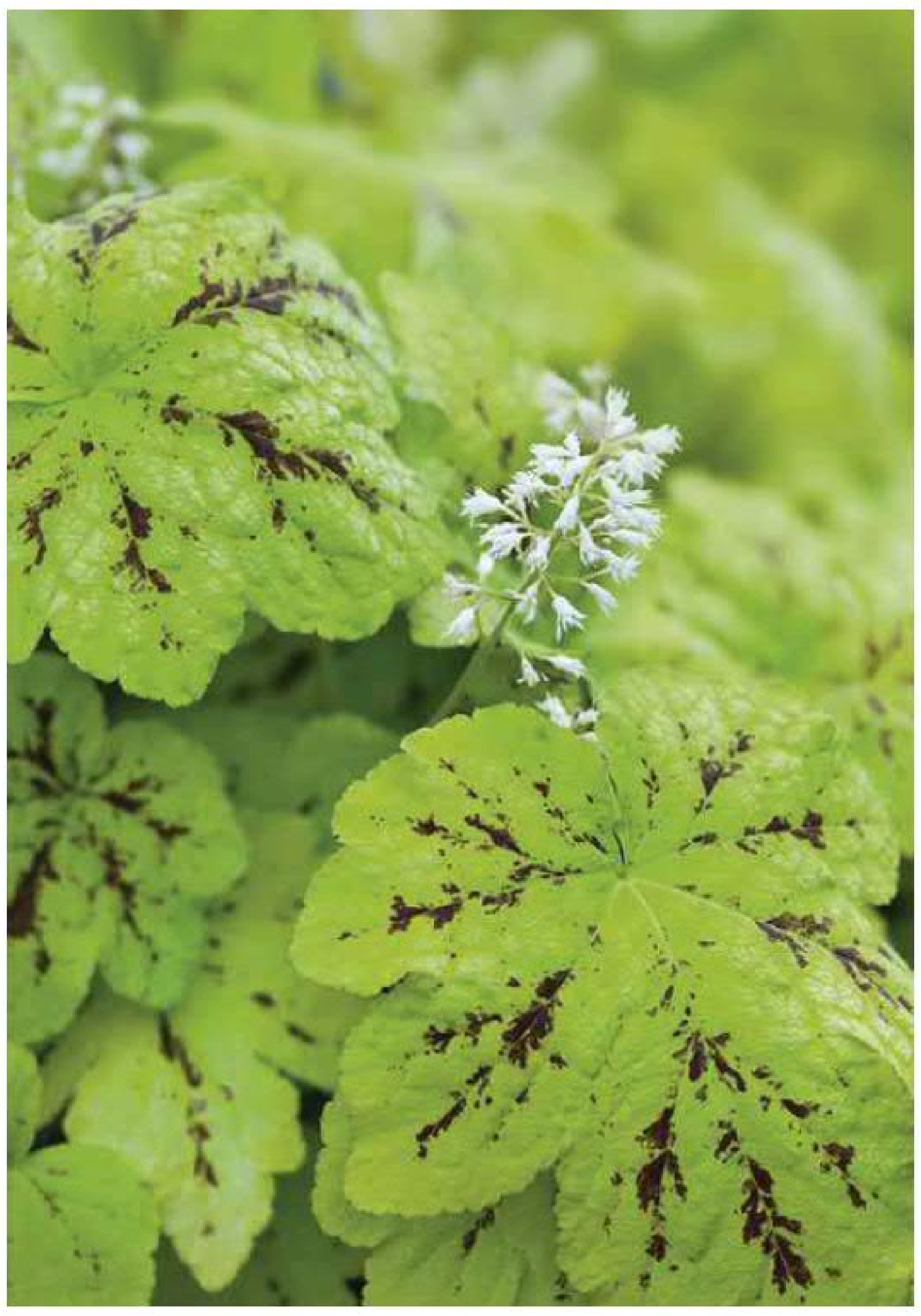
x *Heucherella* 'Brass Lantern'
A particularly vigorous plant with maple-shaped leaves in brassy gold with dark red centres and veining, the best colour contrast being achieved when it is grown in some shade. In winter the colouring changes to brown veining on an olive background. White flowers are borne on dark stems.
H 45cm. S 45cm. USDA 4a-9b.



x ***Heucherella*** **'Redstone Falls'**
Forms excellent ground cover, sending out trailing stems in autumnal tones with dark veins. Also works brilliantly in a hanging basket, where the stems can trail dramatically. H 25cm. S 38cm. USDA 4a-9b.

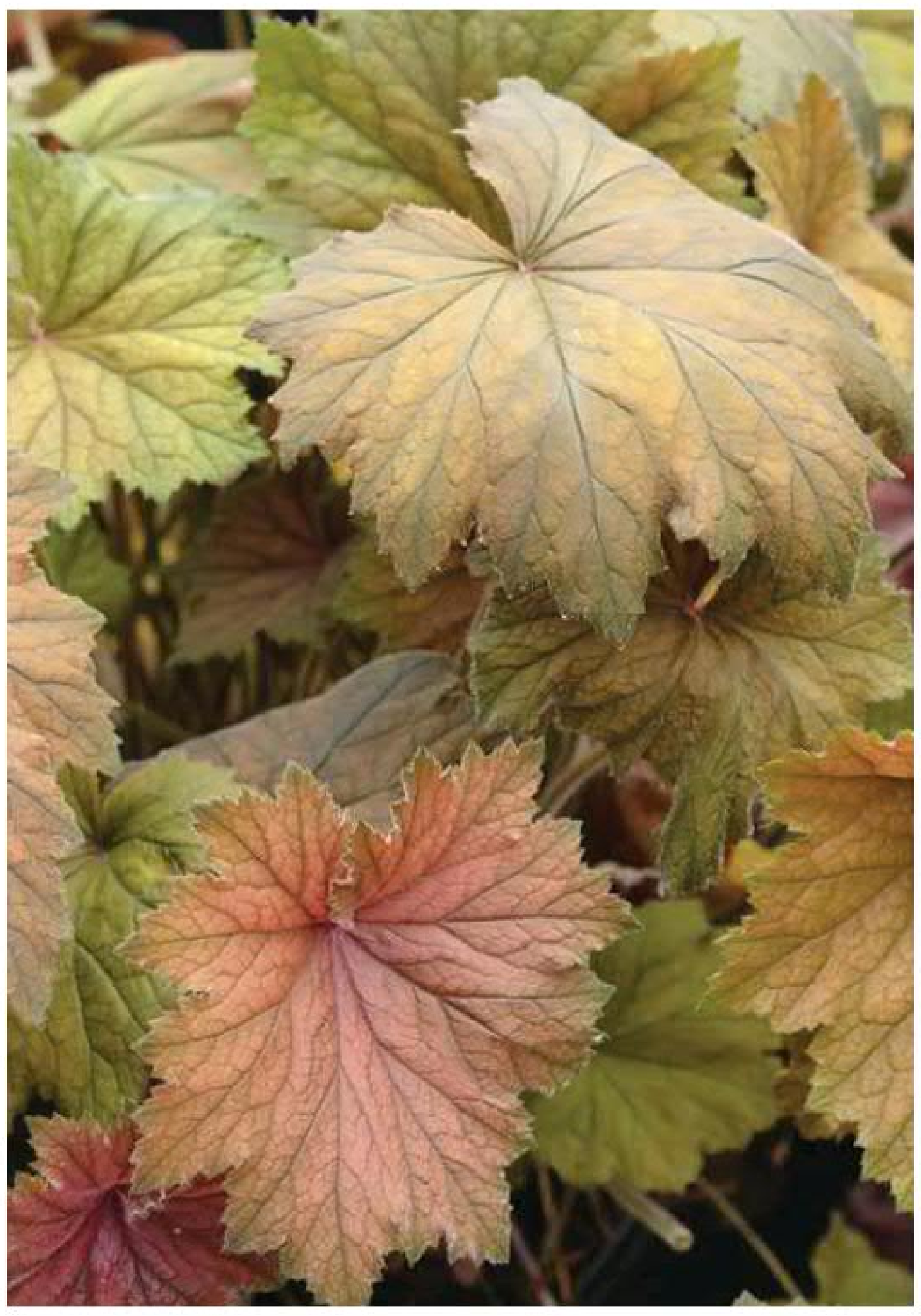


x ***Heucherella*** **'Sweet Tea'**
Glorious sunset-coloured leaves with rich, plum-coloured veining make this one of the most intensely coloured of all heucherellas. Has pretty star-shaped flowers. H 35cm. S 35cm. USDA 4a-9b.



x ***Heucherella*** **'Yellowstone Falls'**
Its chartreuse leaves are lightly veined with crimson. The stems will trail up to 90cm if it is grown in a hanging basket, and the foliage will light up a dark corner all year round. H 50cm. S 50cm. USDA 4a-9b.

GAP PHOTOS / THOMAS ALAMY



H. **'Bronze Beauty'**
A strong and vigorous plant that provides big, bold architectural foliage in shades of bronze and cappuccino. In spring it bears 75cm spires of creamy white flowers. H 50cm. S 50cm. USDA 4a-9b.

Three of a kind

This group of plants has much in common and many find it hard to tell them apart – so what is the difference? Heucheras originate in rocky and woodland areas around the Rocky Mountains in North America; tiarellas are from woodlands and stream banks in North America and East Asia; while x *Heucherella* is an intergeneric hybrid of the two and was bred in a garden setting, rather than arising naturally in the wild. All three genera have neat mounds of almost-guaranteed evergreen foliage and tall sprays of flowers that are held above them, and all three are used in similar ways in the garden. However, there are some distinct differences. The flower type is the most notable. *Heuchera* is commonly known as coral bell, a name that relates to the stately racemes of bell-shaped flowers, often in pinks, with five stamen. The genus also contains a great variety of foliage colour, including deep purples, and it is grown primarily for the foliage. *Tiarella* is also known as foam flower on account of the fact its flowers (with ten stamen) are borne in such a mass as to create a frothy cloud above the leaves. The leaves themselves are mostly only variations on green, and so with *Tiarella* it's the flowers that steal the show. The cross between the two genera that resulted in x *Heucherella* was first described in 1930 by Heinrich Wehrhahn. The general idea has been to combine the impressive range of leaf range of *Heuchera* with the voluminous flower type of *Tiarella*.

Cultivation

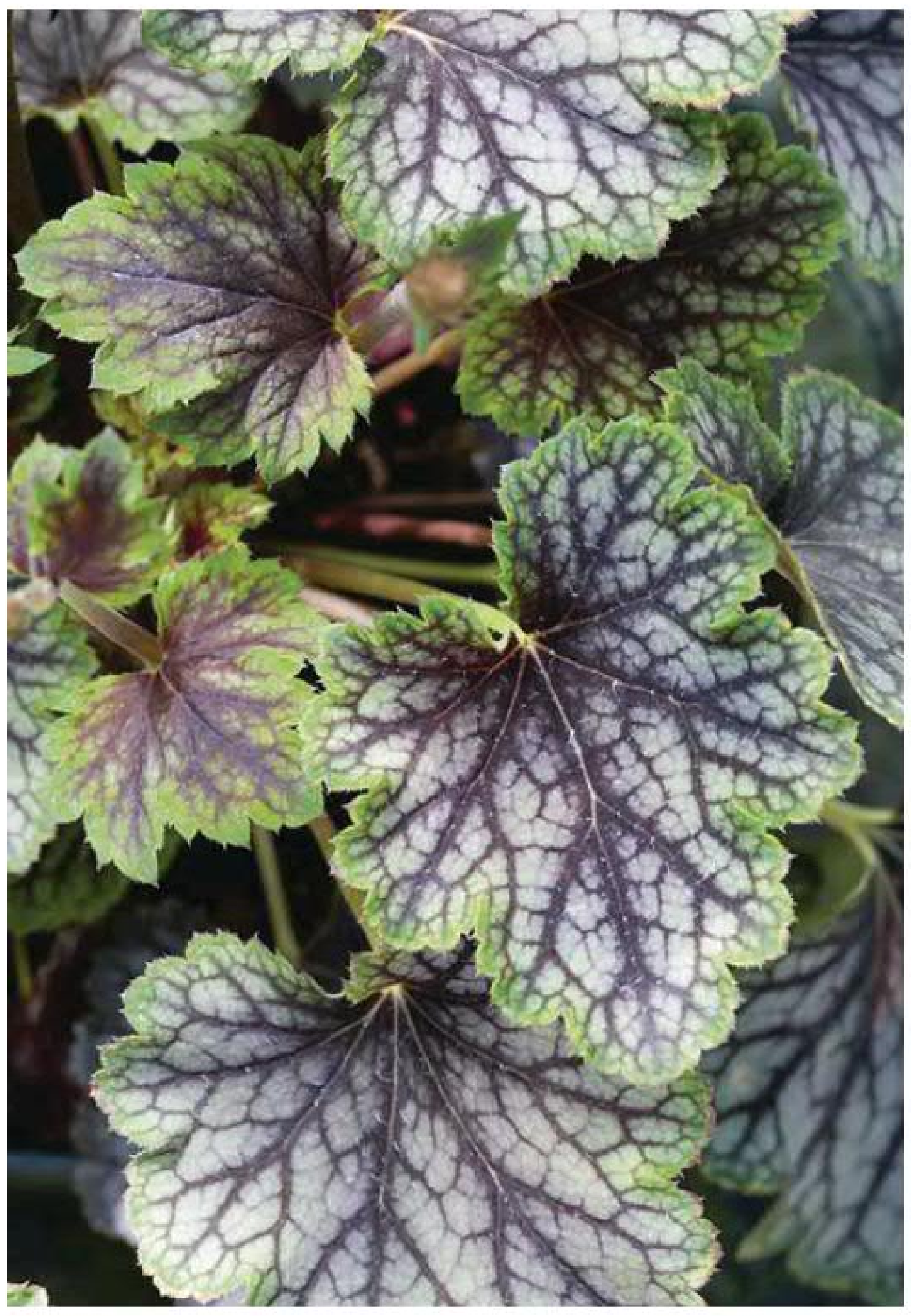
All three genera are happy to grow in some shade and some sun, but the pale green types (usually *Tiarella* and x *Heucherella*) need more shade than sun as otherwise their leaves can get scorched. Generally, woodland edge conditions are perfect. Morning sunlight and afternoon shade suits all of them very well. They are not fussy about soil as long as it isn't too damp. "They are very hardy," says Jooles, "but you can get winter deaths if the roots have been waterlogged.

Remember that some of them grow in rocky cracks in the wild."

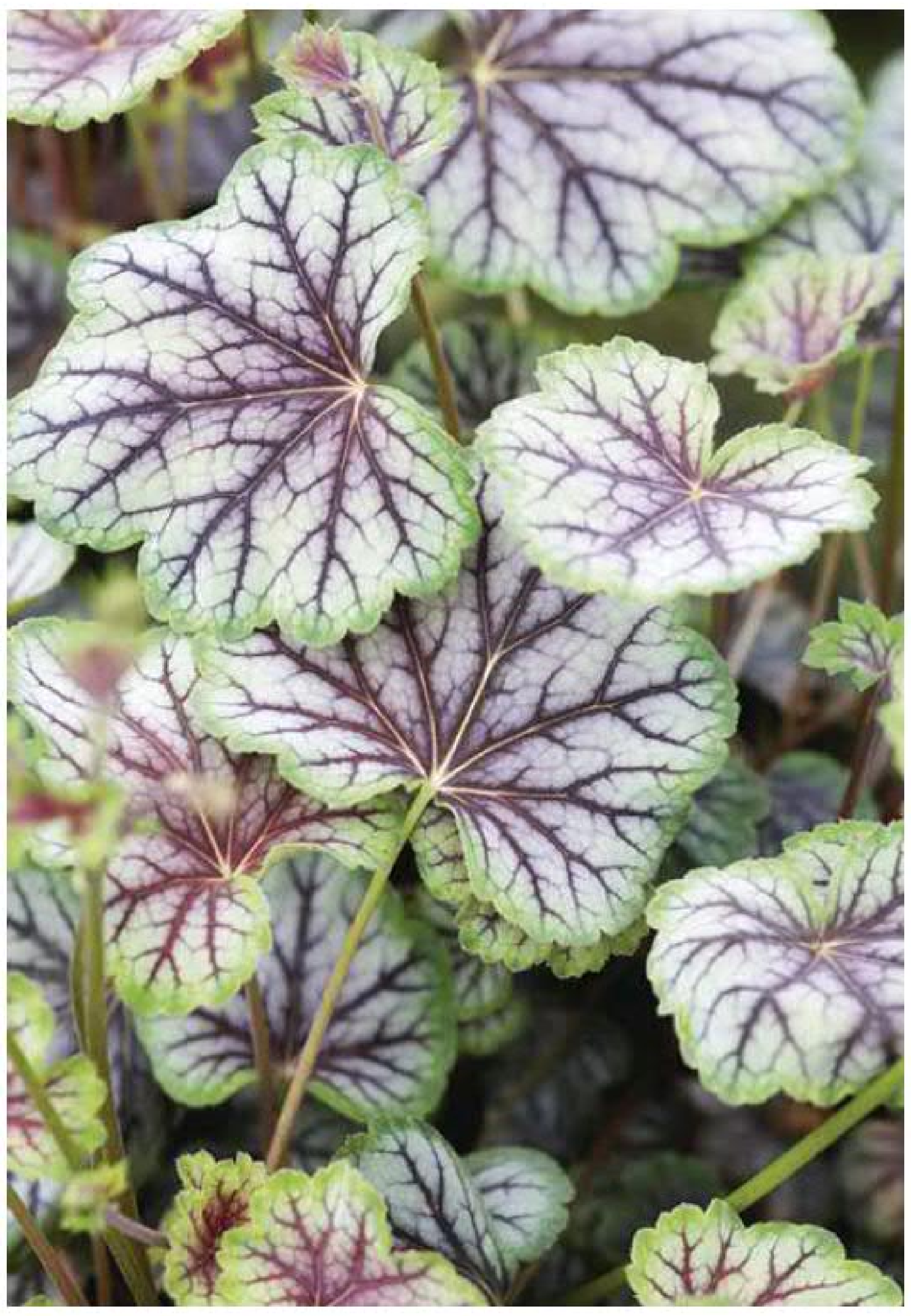
They don't need a great deal of care once established, but can be lifted and split every few years to keep them growing strongly. However, you don't have to unless the plants look as though they need it. "They sort of push themselves out of the ground after a while. That's when they are telling you they need to be split," explains Jooles. Feeding isn't generally necessary, except for those in containers, which appreciate a liquid seaweed feed throughout the growing season, or an application of a slow-release fertiliser in spring. The only other regular care required is a cut back once a year. "People are afraid of cutting the leaves right back but they reappear very quickly," says Jooles. "Don't cut them back after September though, as you want a mound of foliage over the plant to protect it through winter. We cut them back hard in early spring and then the leaves are fresh and gorgeous for flowering time."

Where to see and buy

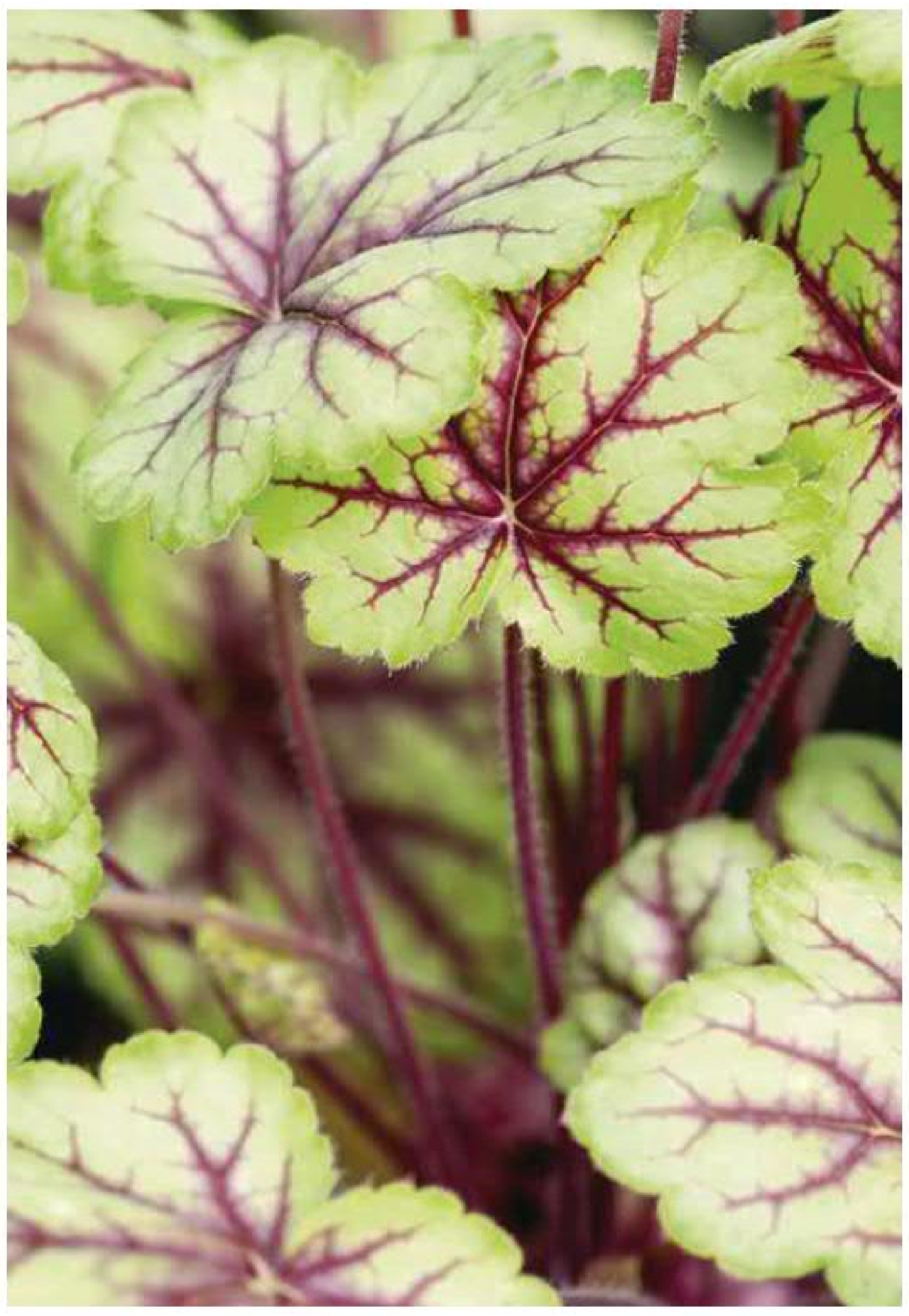
- **Heucheraholics**
  Boldre Nurseries, Southampton
  Road, Lymington,
  Hampshire SO41 8ND.
  Tel 01590 670581,
  heucheraholics.co.uk
  Open by appointment only, or on specified open days. Mail order is available year round.
- **Plantagogo**
  Jubilee Cottage Nursery, Snape
  Lane, Englesea Brook, nr Crewe,
  Cheshire CW2 5QN.
  Tel 01270 820335, plantagogo.com
  Specialist grower of heucheras, heucherellas, tiarellas and hardy perennials. Also holds National Collections of heucheras and tiarellas, available to view by appointment.
- **Plants for Shade**
  Long Acre Plants, Charlton Musgrove,
  nr Wincanton, Somerset BA9 8EX.
  Tel 01963 32802,
  plantsforshade.co.uk
  Offers a selection of tiarellas, as well as other plants suitable for shade.



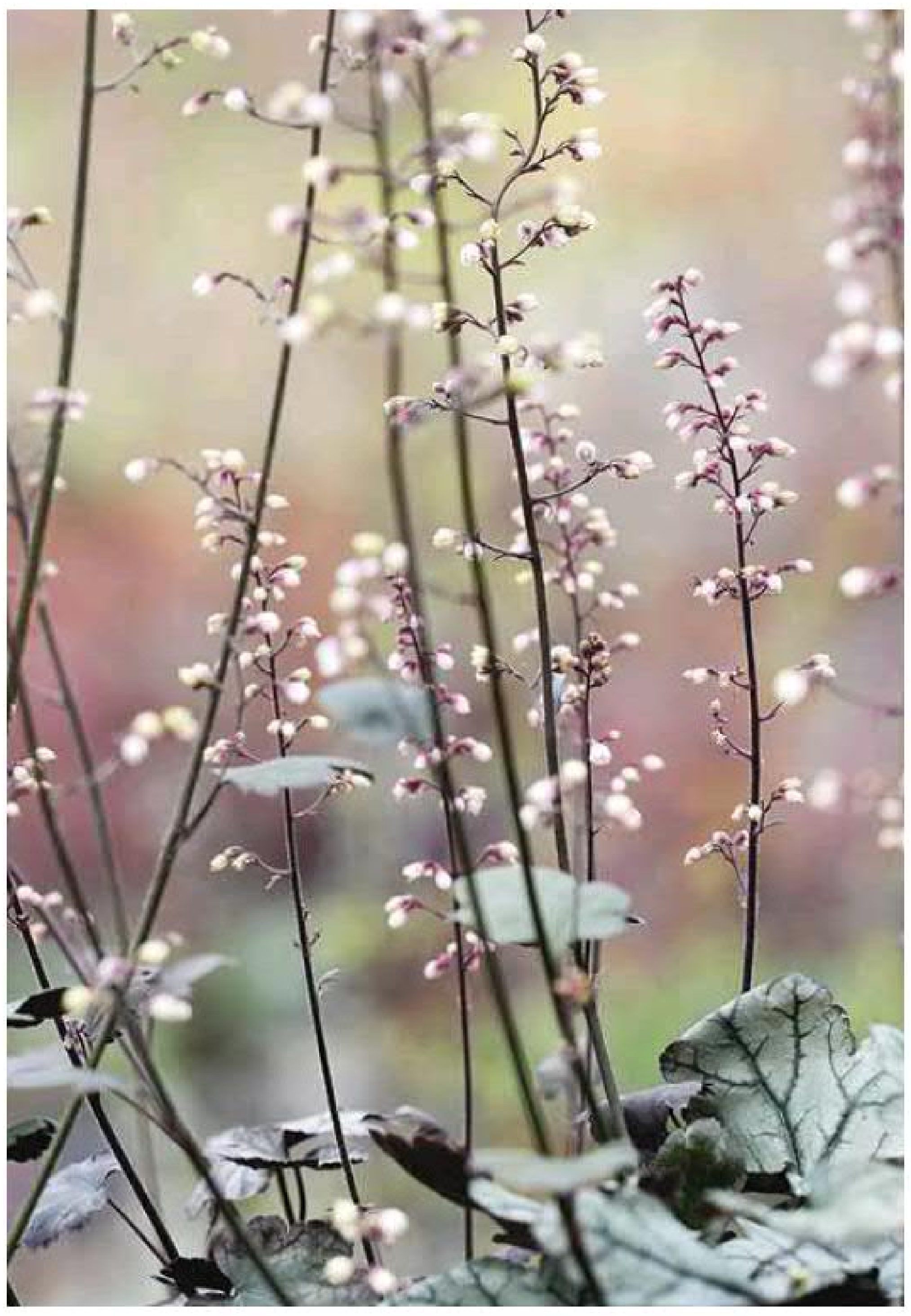
***H.* 'Beauty Colour'**
Silver leaves with deep-red veining and dark-green edges. Beautiful in containers alongside other silvery foliage and white flowers. Bees love its tall spikes of white flowers in early summer. H 60cm. S 60cm. USDA 4a-9b.



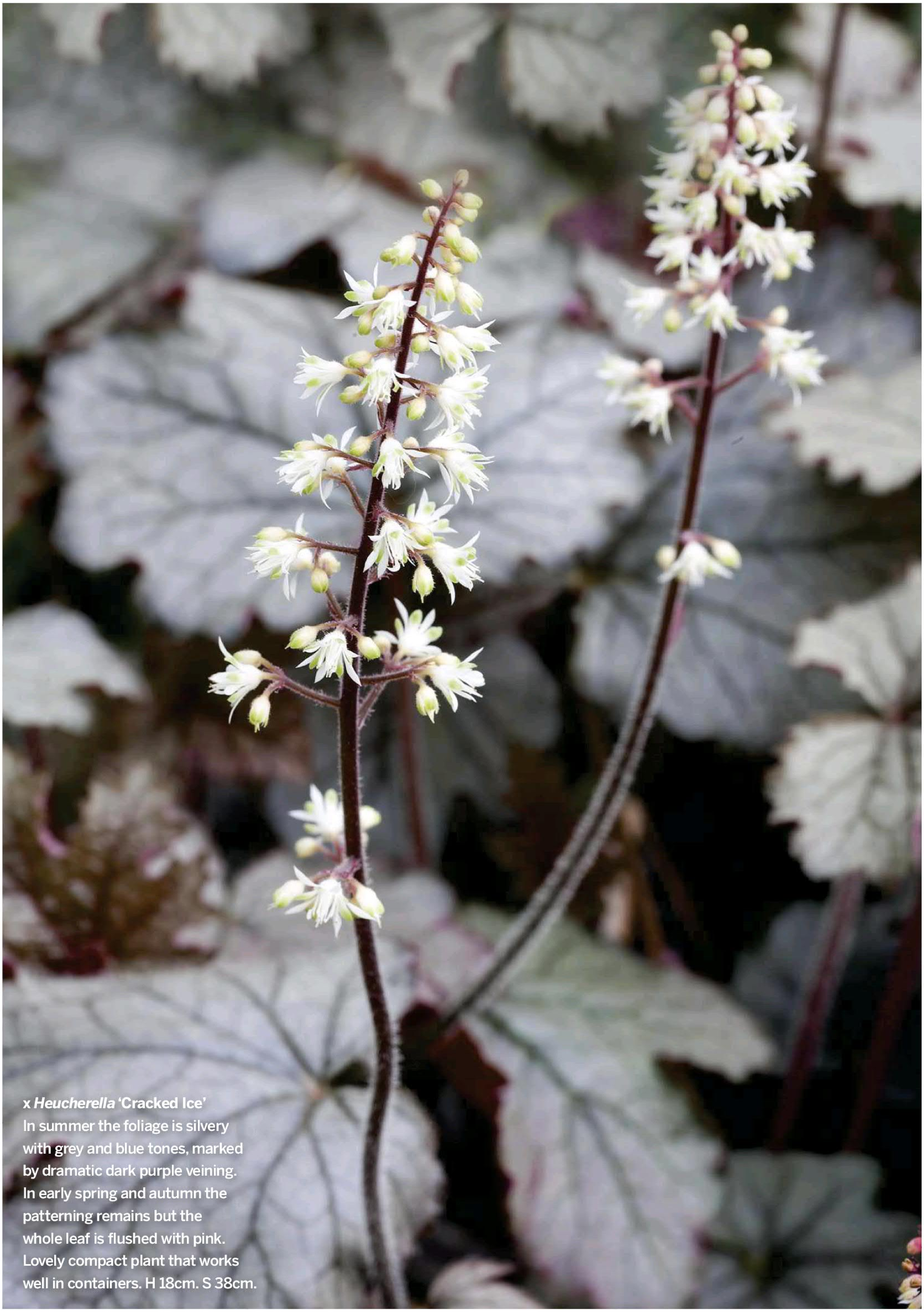
***H.* 'Green Spice'**
Mid-green leaves are heavily overlaid with bright silver, marked by deep plum veins. Forms a neat mound of foliage and it looks great in a container. Flowers are small and pale. H 30cm. S 30cm. USDA 4a-9b.



***H.* 'Circus'**
Leaves are peach with red veining as they emerge, turning pale green, veined with red and developing a delicate silvery overlay as they mature. In summer, it has tall sprays of pink flowers. H 40cm. S 50cm. USDA 4a-8b.



***H.* 'Jade Gloss'**
The leaves are almost completely silvered, with dark-green veining and dark-purple undersides. Pale-pink flowers are borne on long stems in late spring. Moody, beautiful and good in a container. H 25cm. S 30cm. USDA 4a-9b.



x *Heucherella* 'Cracked Ice'
In summer the foliage is silvery with grey and blue tones, marked by dramatic dark purple veining. In early spring and autumn the patterning remains but the whole leaf is flushed with pink. Lovely compact plant that works well in containers. H 18cm. S 38cm.

THANKS TO HEUCHERAHOLICS WHERE THE IMAGES IN THIS FEATURE WERE PHOTOGRAPHED

Frank Ronan

For ten years now, novelist Frank Ronan has been entertaining *Gardens Illustrated* readers with his monthly musings. Now we find out what really makes him tick

WORDS **JODIE JONES** PORTRAIT **CHARLIE HOPKINSON**

Magazine readers are creatures of habit, with a tendency to open each new edition at the back page first. So, the chances are you've already seen Frank Ronan's column for this month. The Writer's Plot has occupied the same position for the past ten years, covering everything from Frank's war on couch grass to the joy of lighter summer evenings. The subject is always different (a neat trick in the inherently cyclical world of gardening), but the style is the same – irreverent, opinionated and occasionally provoking.

"If there is any originality in my writing, it comes from my lack of formal training," says Frank. "I am not a professional and I don't do things that well. I have high expectations that I don't fulfil, but I have gardened passionately for a long time." He wasn't one of those prodigal tots who spring from the womb knowing they're destined for a life in horticulture, but he was bright and curious, and took great pleasure in the way a Latin plant name rolled off the tongue.

Born in 1963, in County Wexford, Ireland, the second of ten children, Frank soon learned that if you wanted something doing you'd better do it yourself. His mother was devoted in equal measure to her family and the cigarettes that led to her death when Frank was just 17. He describes his father as "a functioning alcoholic who would do a little bit of anything, provided his business could be conducted from a bar stool".

"I had an equestrian upbringing, rather than a garden upbringing," Frank says. He had his own pony (which he hid to stop his father selling it) and, with six packs of hounds in the area, could hunt every day of the week if he felt so inclined. Next to horses, words were his great passion, and in his teenage years he began to write, first poetry and then novels. By the time he left school, shortly after his 17th birthday, he was already writing his first novel in secret.

"Then I went to work for a friend of a friend in a Dorset hunting and eventing yard, where the long hours left hardly enough time for sleep, let alone writing, so that rather backfired," he says. For the next few years, he shuttled between Ireland and England, with a detour to run a riding school in Australia, and an unhappy sojourn in London, where he worked in architectural PR. "I hated the city. My only escape was the yard behind my flat, where I made a garden to stay sane."

When the city got too much for him, he and his partner put their cats and typewriters in the back of their car and ran away to the Scottish highlands to get some writing done. This resulted in his first published novel, which was a great success (*The Men Who Loved Evelyn Cotton* won the Irish Times/Aer Lingus fiction award in 1989), and when he discovered he could buy a house with two hectares of land in France for £10,000 he was ready to embark on a new chapter.

"My schoolboy French was totally inadequate," he says. "So it was a steep learning curve, but the life was good. It was there that I had my first proper garden, although it proved such a distraction that I had to get a flat in Dublin to get any writing done."

And when he wasn't writing or gardening, he was reading about gardening. "I was a particular fan of Christopher Lloyd's writing, but in *The Well-Tempered Garden* he said that two blue flowers couldn't go together. I was happily growing *Salvia uliginosa* with a *Felicia* and I thought he'd change his mind if he could see that combination, so I wrote and told him. Christo wrote back immediately saying, 'it is the yellow eye of the daisy that makes your picture work. Now, who are you and what are you doing in France?'"

It was the start of a long friendship, and Frank often stayed with Christo at Great Dixter. "We always had such fun and I still miss him desperately." He feels less nostalgic about the labour-intensive horticultural habits of the Great Dixter gardeners. "In fact, only now am I shaking off those strictures. They are fine if you have the staff, but for real life it is just not possible to garden in that way. Gardening has to be fun, or there is no point doing it."

It is just this sort of pragmatism that makes his monthly column such cheering reading. He is a full-time writer and still rides whenever the opportunity presents itself so, like most of us, must fit gardening into already busy days. As regular readers will know, a few months ago he moved again, this time to California, where his partner recently took a job. "Our new house is on a hill ten miles from the sea, surrounded by an acre of scrubby land." In recent years the area has been so blighted by drought that even roadside trees are dying. Frank, who refuses to garden in the rain, should find it an agreeable challenge.

"I am starting to formulate plans for the new garden," he says. "Although there is bound to be a fair bit of trial and error." At the very least, there should be an interesting column or three to be got from it. □

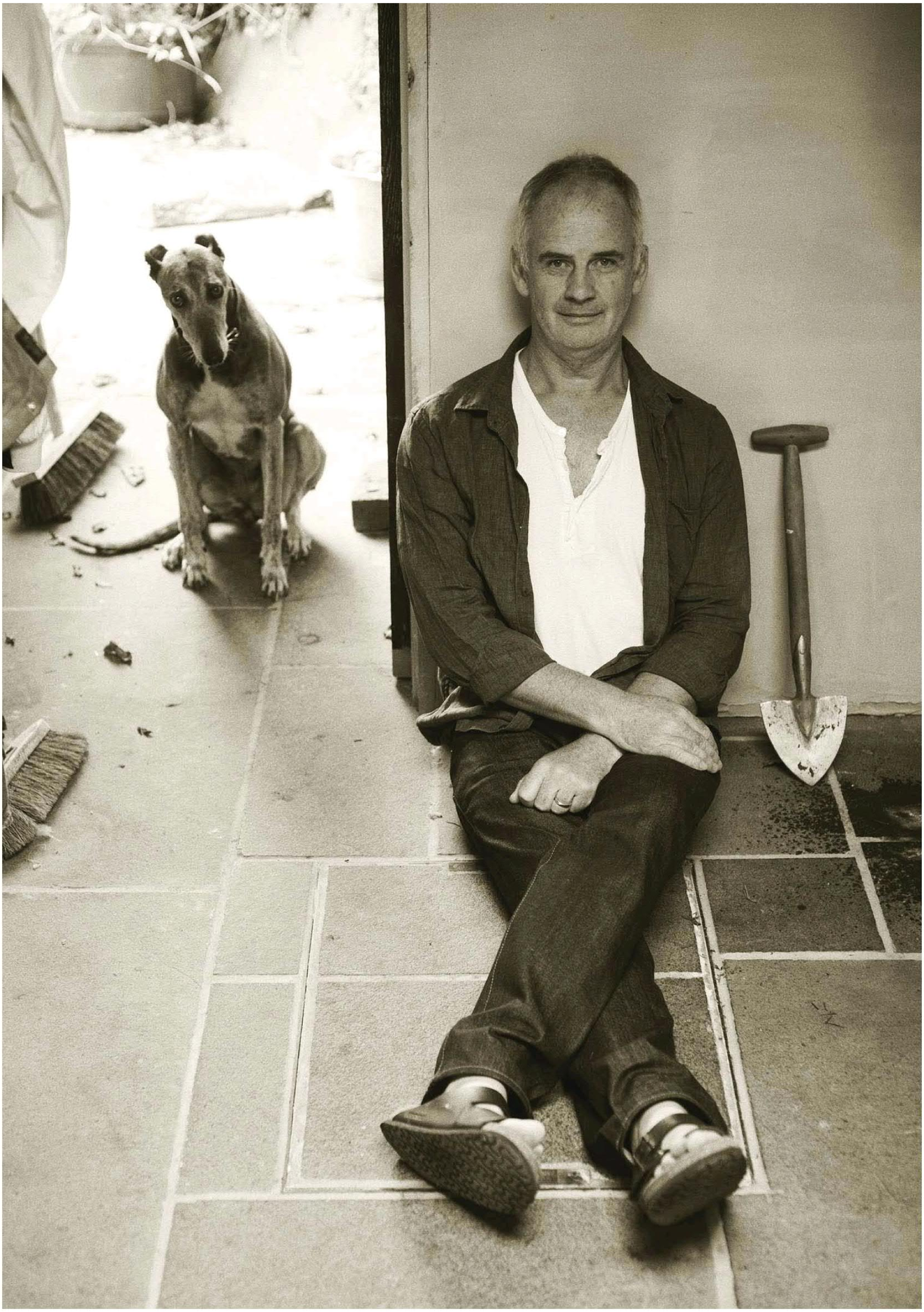
USEFUL INFORMATION

Read Frank's May column on page 130 and turn over to read about Frank's visit to the De Wiersse garden in the Netherlands.

NEXT MONTH

Garden maker Marylyn Abbott

"Gardening has to be fun, or there is no point doing it"



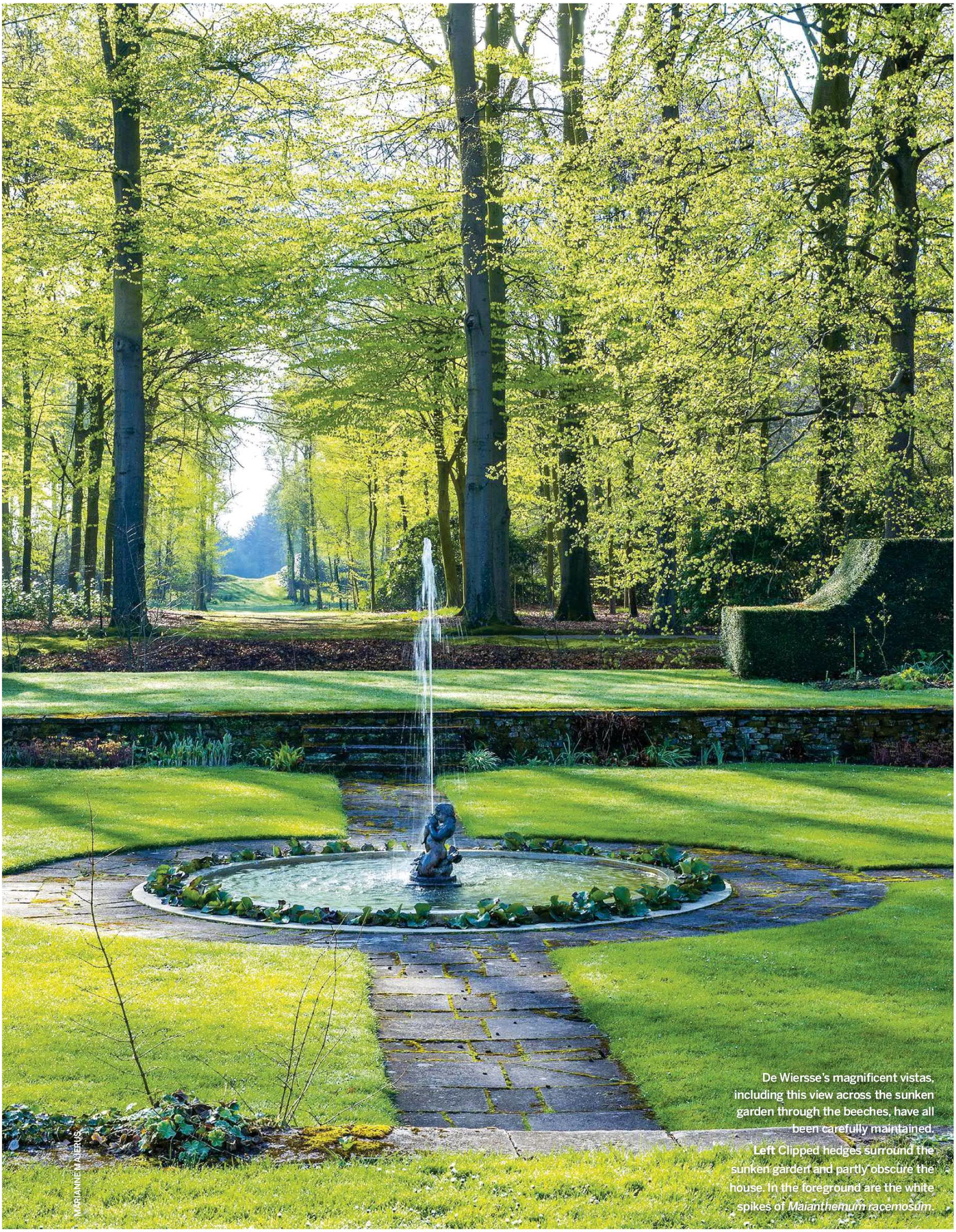
Making history

The beautiful gardens of De Wiersse are an ever-changing work of art that is fresh and modern while remaining loyal to its heritage, thanks to owners Laura and Peter Gatacre

WORDS **FRANK RONAN** PHOTOGRAPHS **MAAYKE DE RIDDER**

In brief

What Historic rural Dutch garden with English influences.
Where Between Vorden and Ruurlo, in the Gelderland province of the Netherlands.
Points of interest Formal structures, romantic planting, impeccable vistas.
Size 39 acres, within a 740-acre estate.
Soil Sandy and acid.
Climate Continental, with cold winters and warm summers.
Hardiness rating USDA 8b.



MARIANNE MAJERUS

De Wiersse's magnificent vistas, including this view across the sunken garden through the beeches, have all been carefully maintained.
Left Clipped hedges surround the sunken garden and partly obscure the house. In the foreground are the white spikes of *Maianthemum racemosum*.

The Achterhoek, or back corner, of Gelderland is so rural and wooded that, were it not for the architecture, you might hardly think you were in the Netherlands at all. Not far from the medieval town of Zutphen, you will, having got lost once or twice along tree-lined avenues of sand, find De Wiersse, a moated early 18th-century house in a pristine landscape.

At first it all seems straightforwardly continental: formal arrangements of canals and avenues laid out to flatter an unassuming gem of a house, great trees dipping into water, lawn giving way to meadow, which in turn yields seamlessly to wood. The first part of the garden is entirely in keeping with this philosophy – a vast parterre of box edging and roses, made more to be seen from the drawing room windows than for closer examination.

You might, at that point, think you have got it, and then you notice that the path leading out of the parterre is guarded by a enormous pair of topiary ducks. Not beautiful 18th-century ducks, but cartoon rubber ducks with bulging eyes and grinning bills. This, you now realise, is about to get more interesting. Beyond the ducks there is a sunken garden with a double border and covered walkway. The planting here is exquisite, but in a very un-Dutch way. It is too lively, too improper, too unfussy. You have questions.

One of the answers is that this garden is a bubbling synthesis of Dutch and English sensibilities and nonsensibilities. The house came to Peter Gatacre through his Dutch mother, but his father was English, as is his wife, Laura, who is the current presiding genius of the garden. You don't have to be long in Laura's company to realise that it is she who is largely responible for the liveliness that has been injected into these formal structures. She didn't put the ducks there; they were a practical joke played one on the other by Peter's parents. But she has benefitted from their presence, which proclaims that it's all right to be historical and have fun.

Because on the heritage side the garden is impeccable. Peter is fantastically correct and conscientious about his responsibilities to the place – his grandfather was Victor de Stuers, the godfather of the Rijksmuseum, and so the preservation of heritage runs in his blood. But Laura's eye for a plant and her enthusiasm in collecting, propagating and endlessly shuffling them around is what makes the garden vibrant.

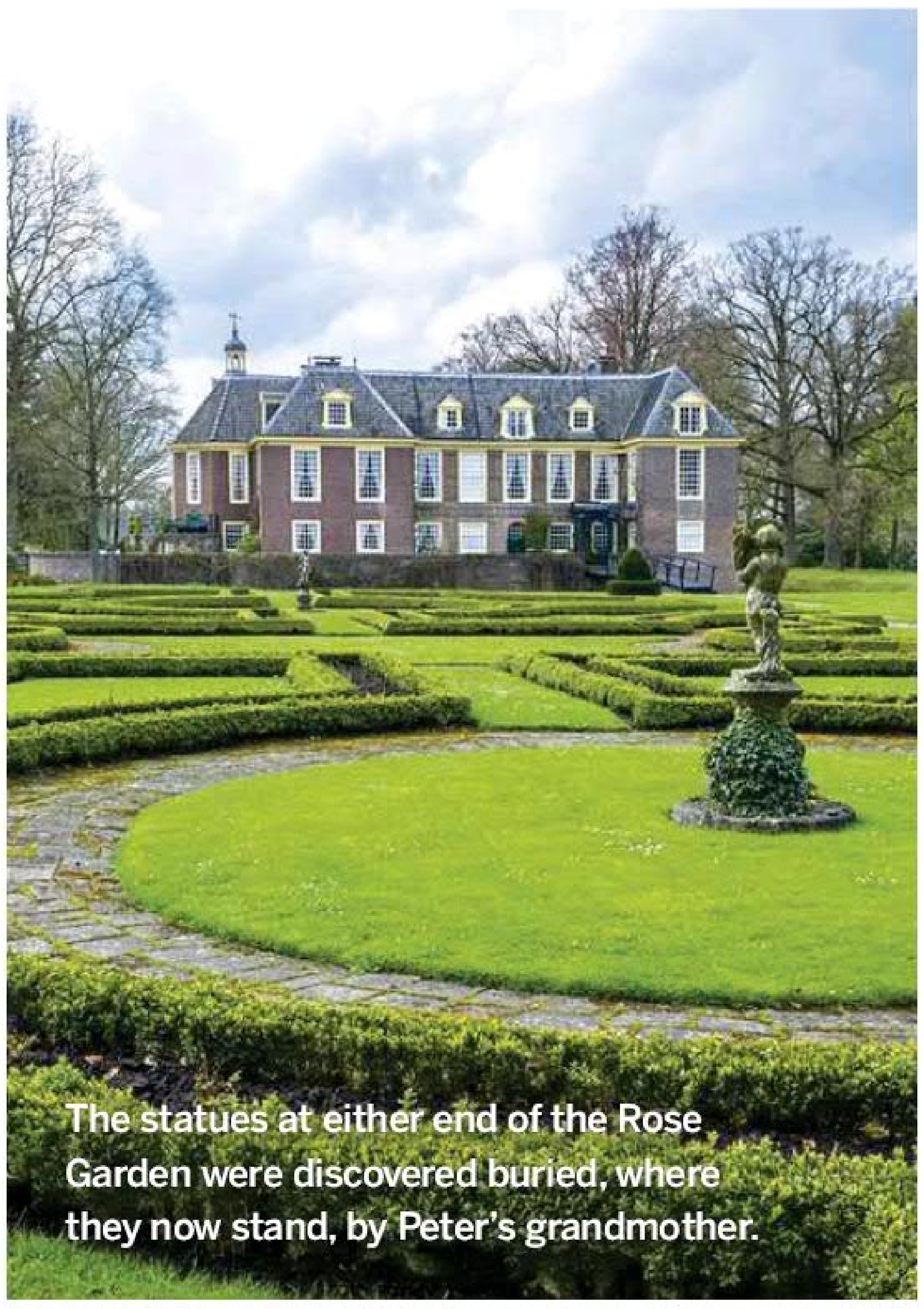
Unlike most gardeners who accompany you with a pair of secateurs, Laura will bring along a wheelbarrow, fork and full can of water. Borders are rearranged on the spot, on the basis of some glancing remark of yours, and any murmer of admiration is likely to lead to an enormous clump being lifted, split and you offered the better half. Meanwhile, when you near the spot from which the fountain is best viewed, Peter will have disappeared to turn it on so that it will be gushing skywards at exactly the right moment.

There are wild parts and formal parts, rare plants grown well and common plants used ingeniously. But my favourite part is the kitchen garden, which is just squares cut into the turf but where Laura has free rein. Here, among the fruit and vegetables, she bulks up plants that she wants more of and indulges the plants that she can't have enough of. It is ebullient. □

Turn over for 12 of Laura's favourite plants

Laura's gardening philosophy

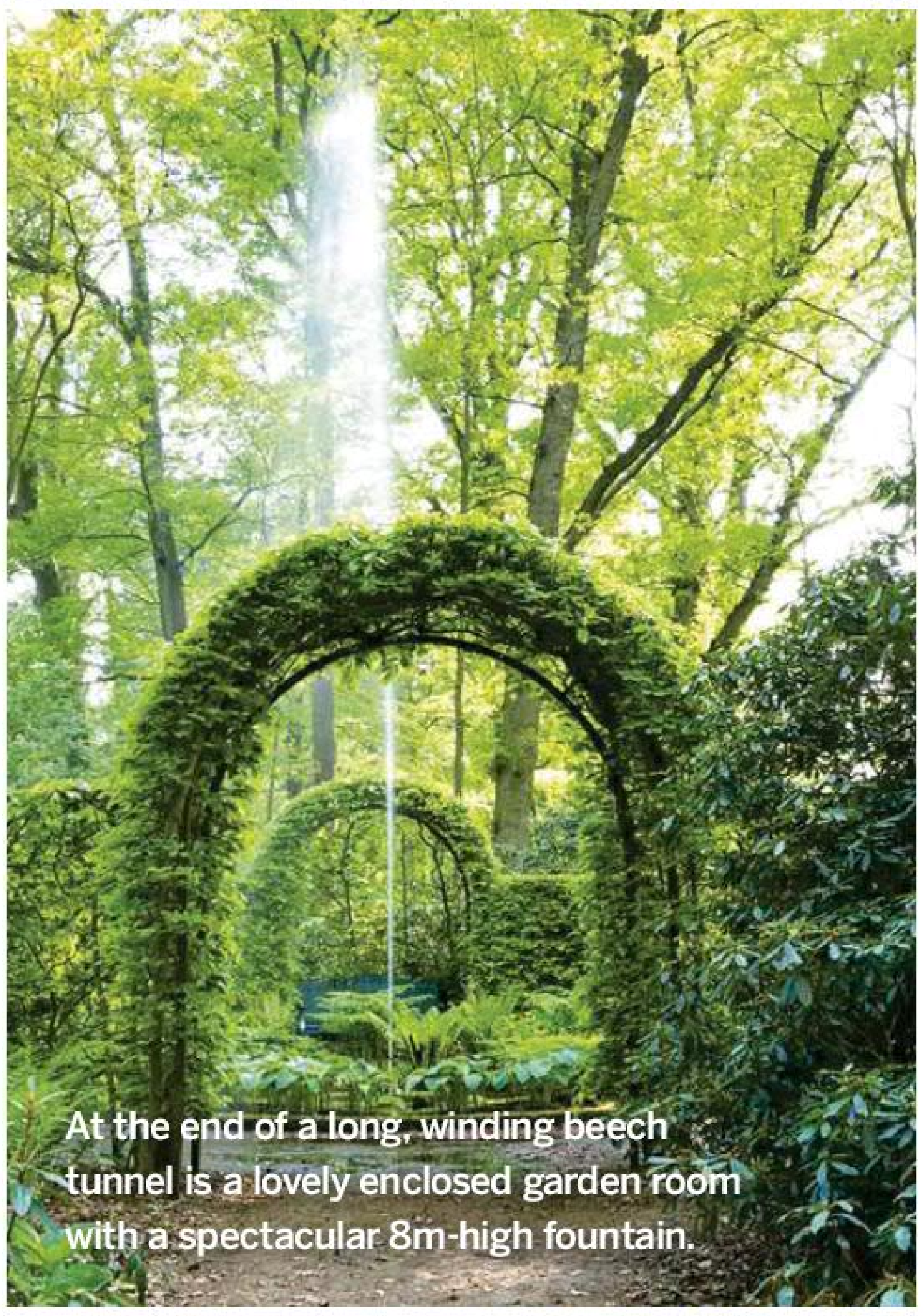
Laura says she doesn't have a philosophy when she gardens. "I'm always going to do something particular and nearly always get distracted," she says. Luckily, it is usually by something else in the garden. With such a vast mix of gardens to oversee, Laura's trick seems to be to attach equal importance to her pleasures and her duties. While the maintenance and restoration of the historical parts are endlessly discussed and reviewed, her indulgences, innovations and pet projects are never far from the top of the agenda. Aside from the kitchen garden, there is also a pets' corner in the woods, barely noticeable unless Laura is with you to point it out, where she experiments with *Meconopsis* and difficult lilies and other treasures that a sensible person would never attempt in this climate. Occasionally, something will defy the logicians by flourishing, from where it makes it into the garden proper, lending depth to the breadth.



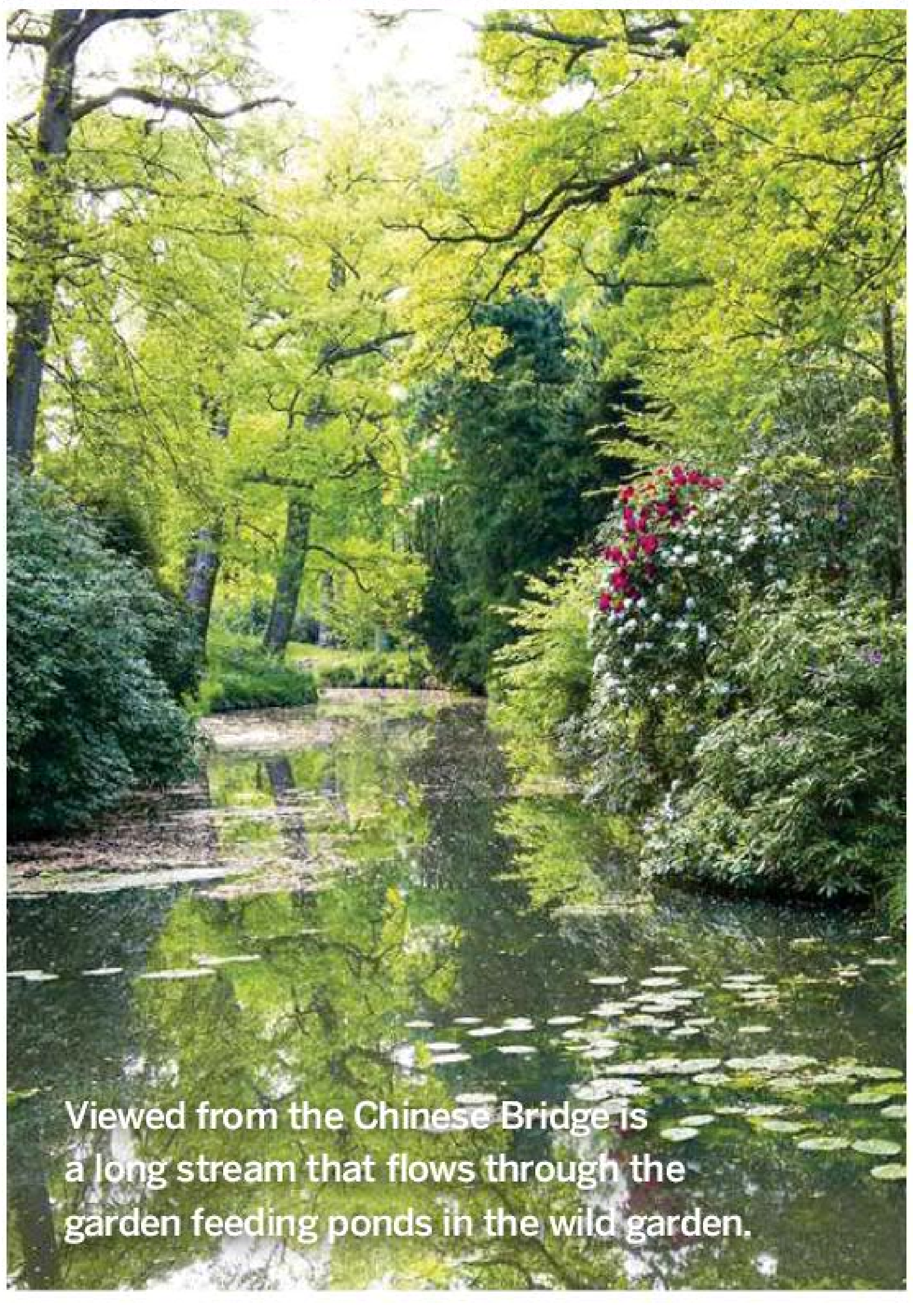
The statues at either end of the Rose Garden were discovered buried, where they now stand, by Peter's grandmother.

MARIANNE MAJERUS

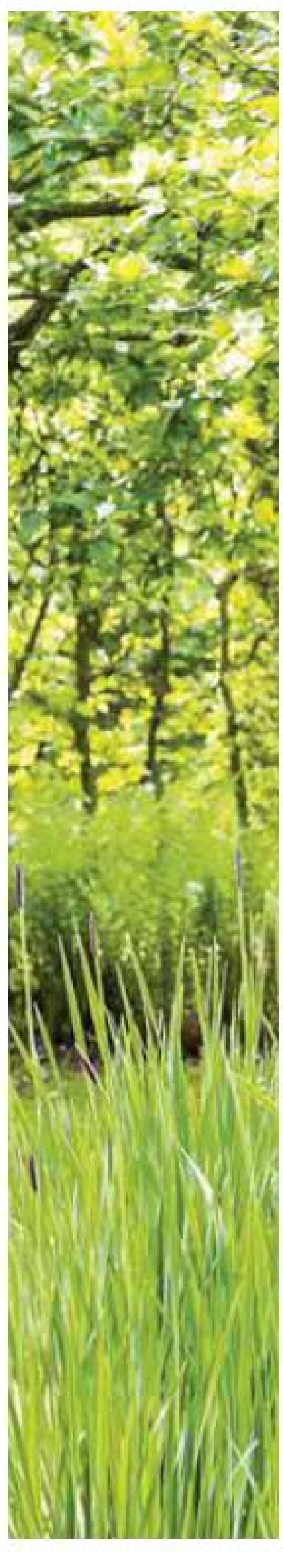
GARDEN PLAN BY HANNAH McVICAR

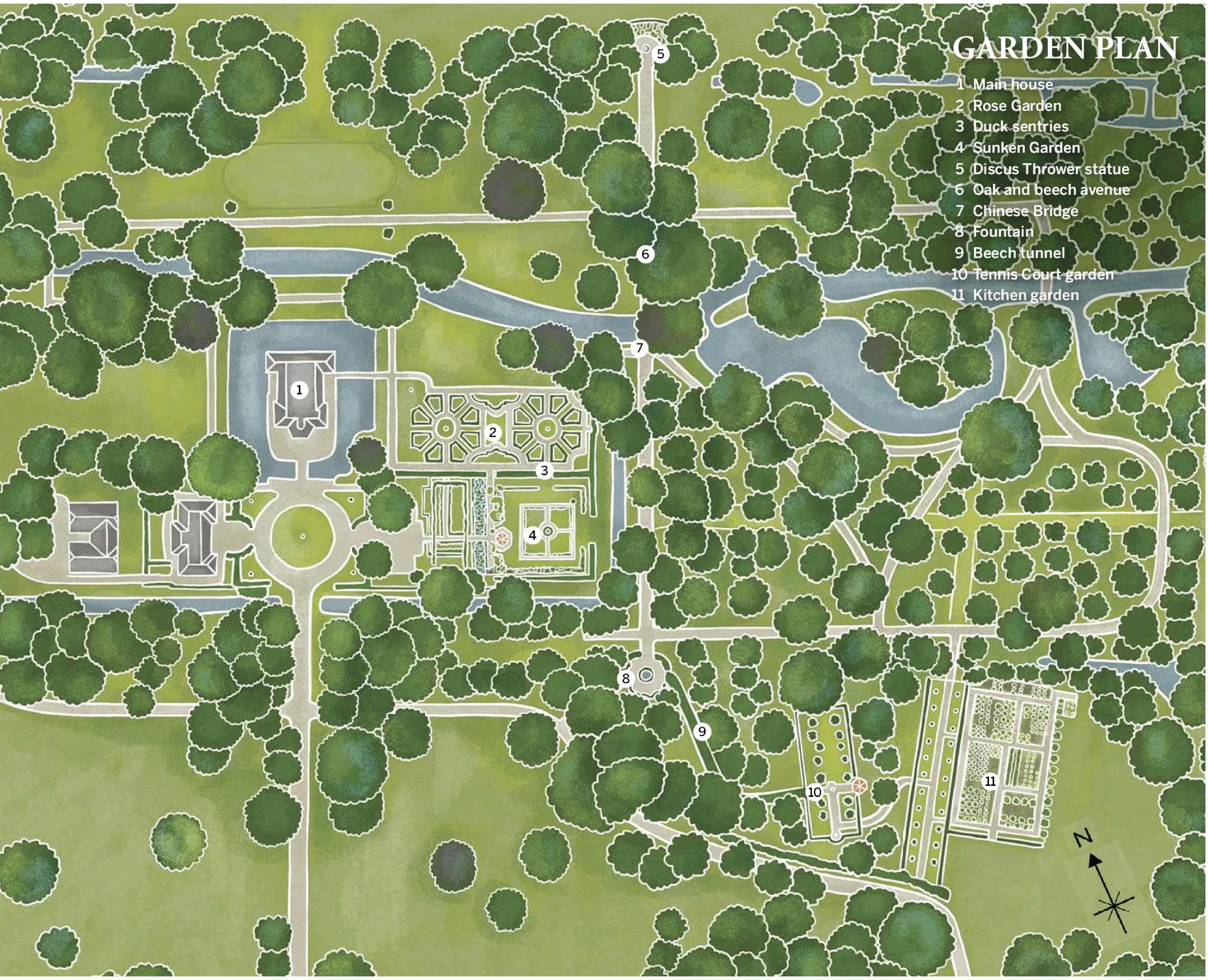


At the end of a long, winding beech tunnel is a lovely enclosed garden room with a spectacular 8m-high fountain.



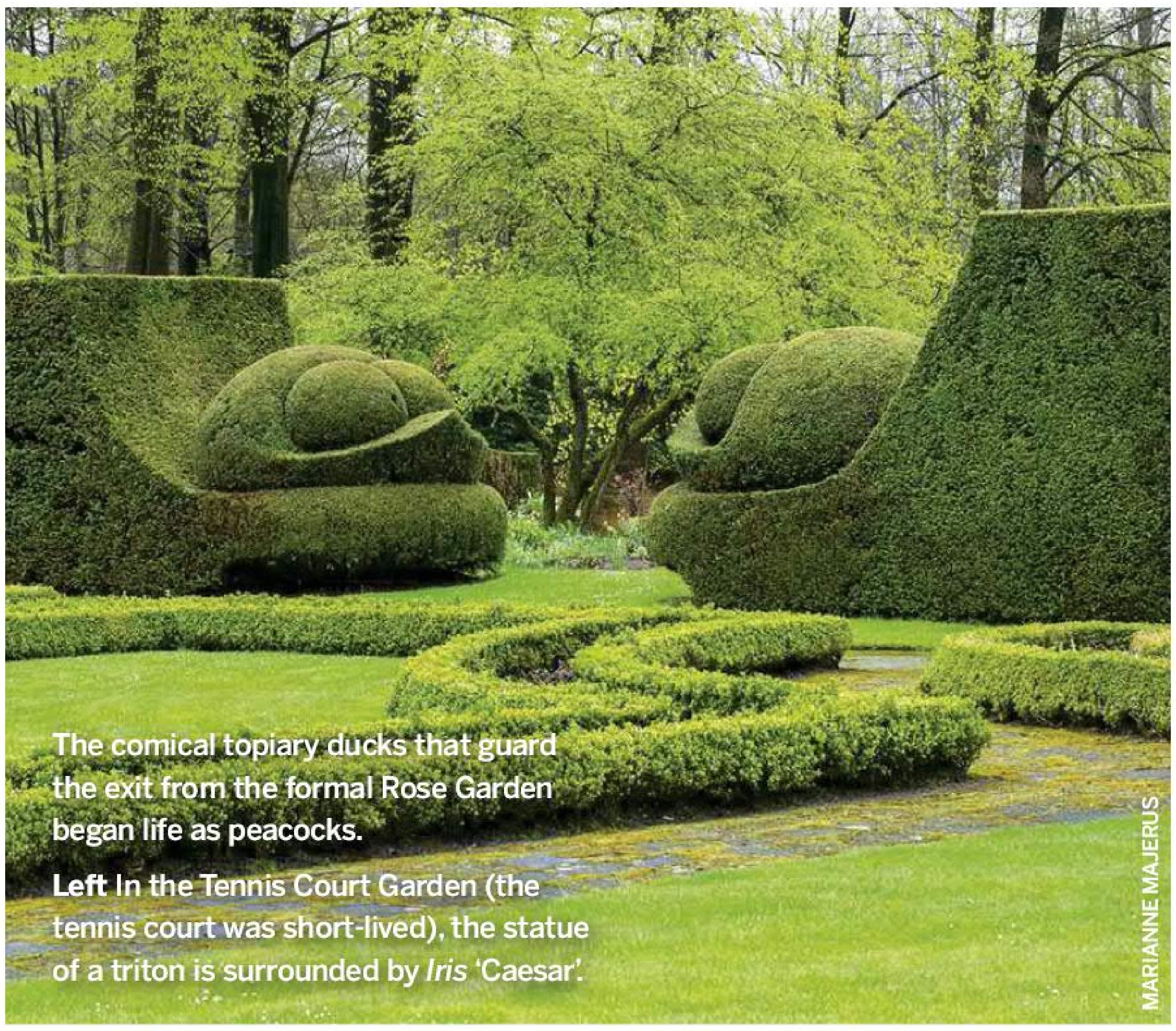
Viewed from the Chinese Bridge is a long stream that flows through the garden feeding ponds in the wild garden.





GARDEN PLAN

1 Main house
2 Rose Garden
3 Duck sentries
4 Sunken Garden
5 Discus Thrower statue
6 Oak and beech avenue
7 Chinese Bridge
8 Fountain
9 Beech tunnel
10 Tennis Court garden
11 Kitchen garden



The comical topiary ducks that guard the exit from the formal Rose Garden began life as peacocks.

Left In the Tennis Court Garden (the tennis court was short-lived), the statue of a triton is surrounded by *Iris* 'Caesar'.

MARIANNE MAJERUS

Old pear trees line the kitchen garden, which produces food for the house and also acts as a trial ground for new plants.

12 of Laura's favourite plants

Laura, shown above with her dog Petal, is passionate about the gardens, which she describes as a "painting you can walk through" but is "never quite finished".

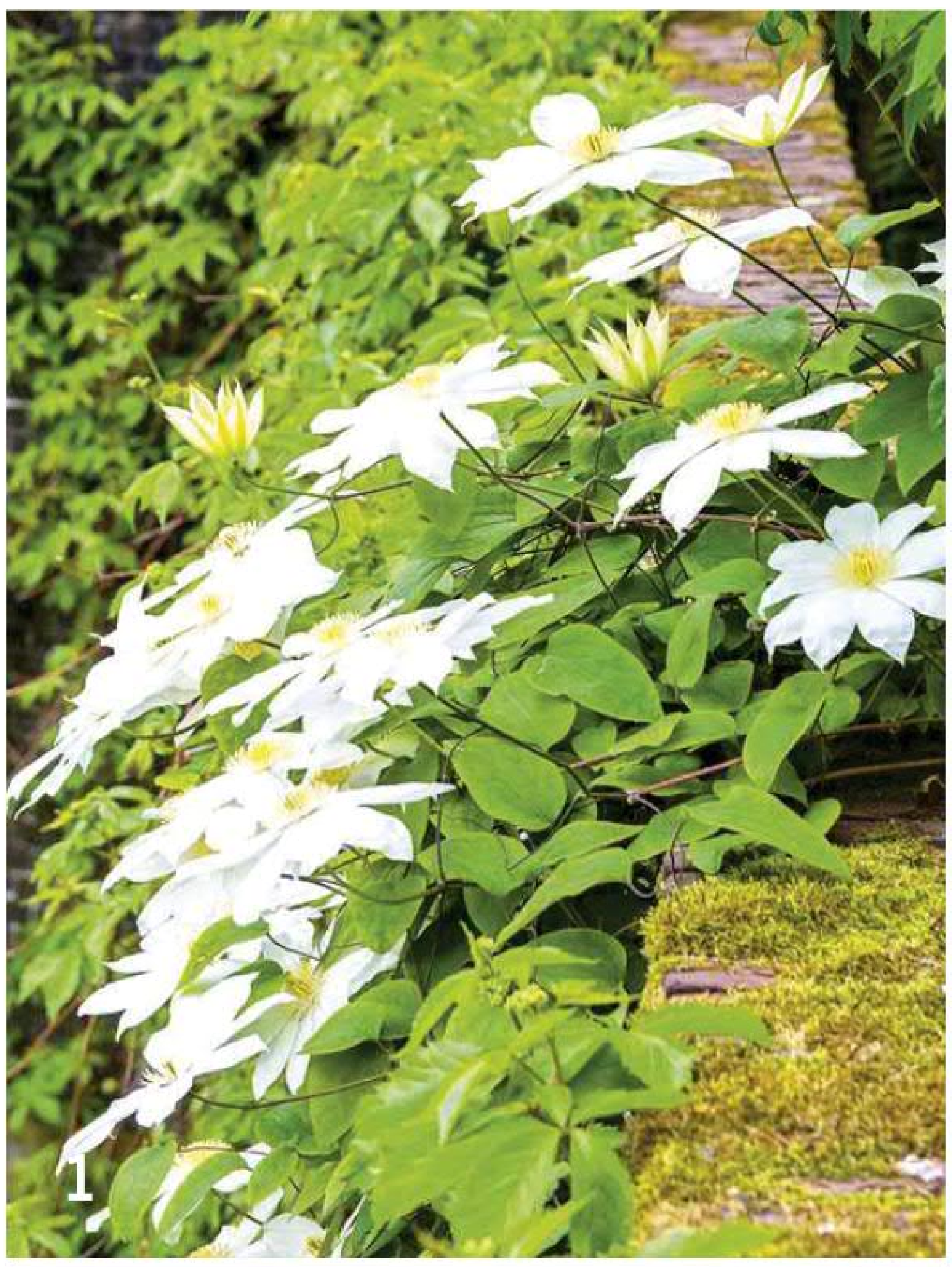
1 *Clematis patens* 'Manshuu Ki'
I bought this clematis many years ago when it was known as *C. patens* 'Wada's Primrose'. It now grows over the wall alongside *Paeonia delavayi* f. *lutea*. The plants complement each other perfectly and are so close to the kitchen they are constantly in view. 1-2m.

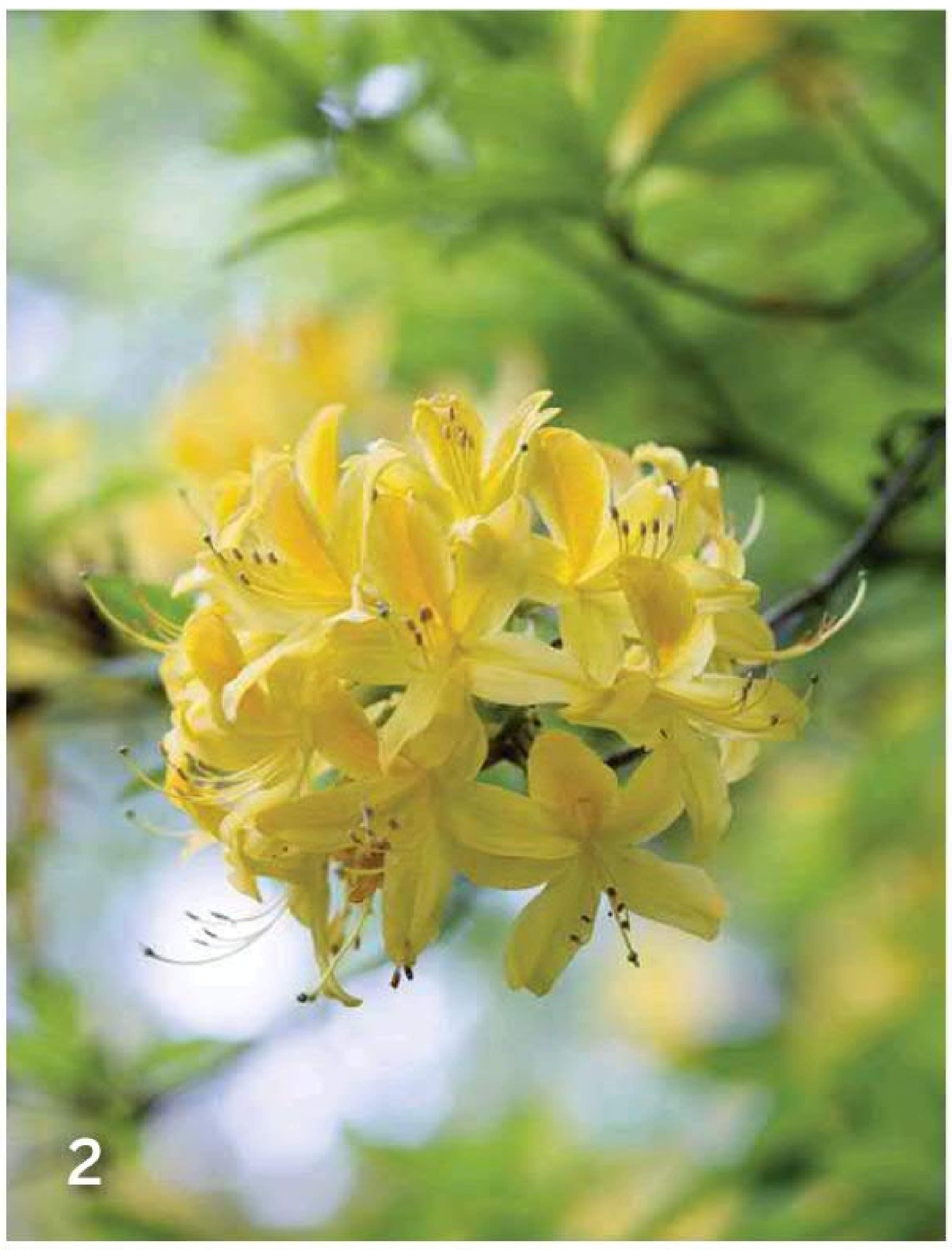
2 *Rhododendron luteum*
This rhododendron was planted by my husband's father, WE Gatacre, in the 1920s. Its wonderful flowers fill the garden with scent in May. 2.4m. USDA 5a-9b[†].

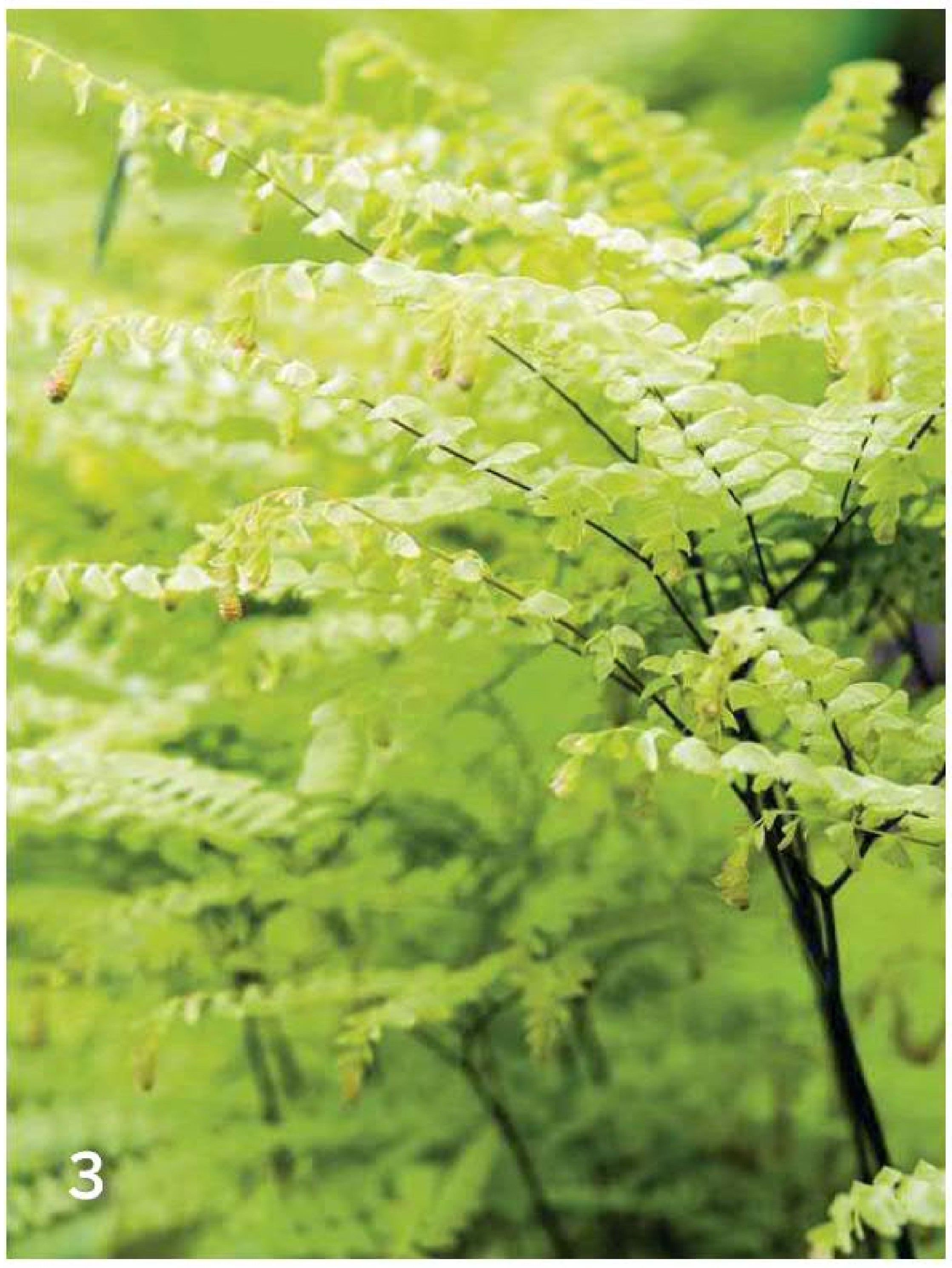
3 *Adiantum aleuticum*
This delicate maidenhair fern, with kohl-black stems, looks so tender but is astonishingly hardy. I love to have species tulips, such as *Tulipa linifolia*, growing out of it. 10cm. AGM[*]. RHS H5.

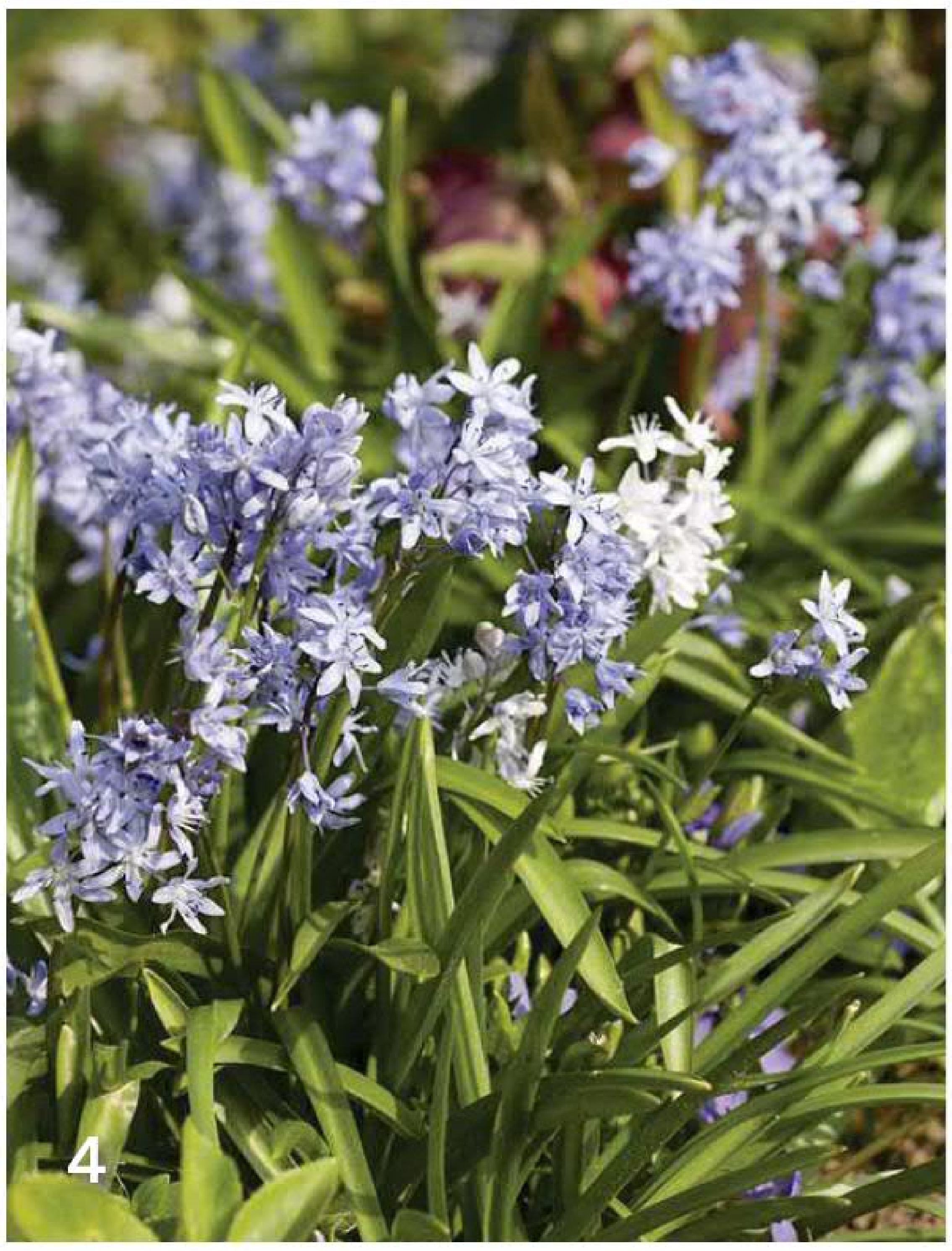
4 *Scilla bithynica*
A friend of mine gave me this and it has increased so generously that it now makes clouds of soft blue among the daisies all over the wild garden. 15cm. AGM. RHS H5.

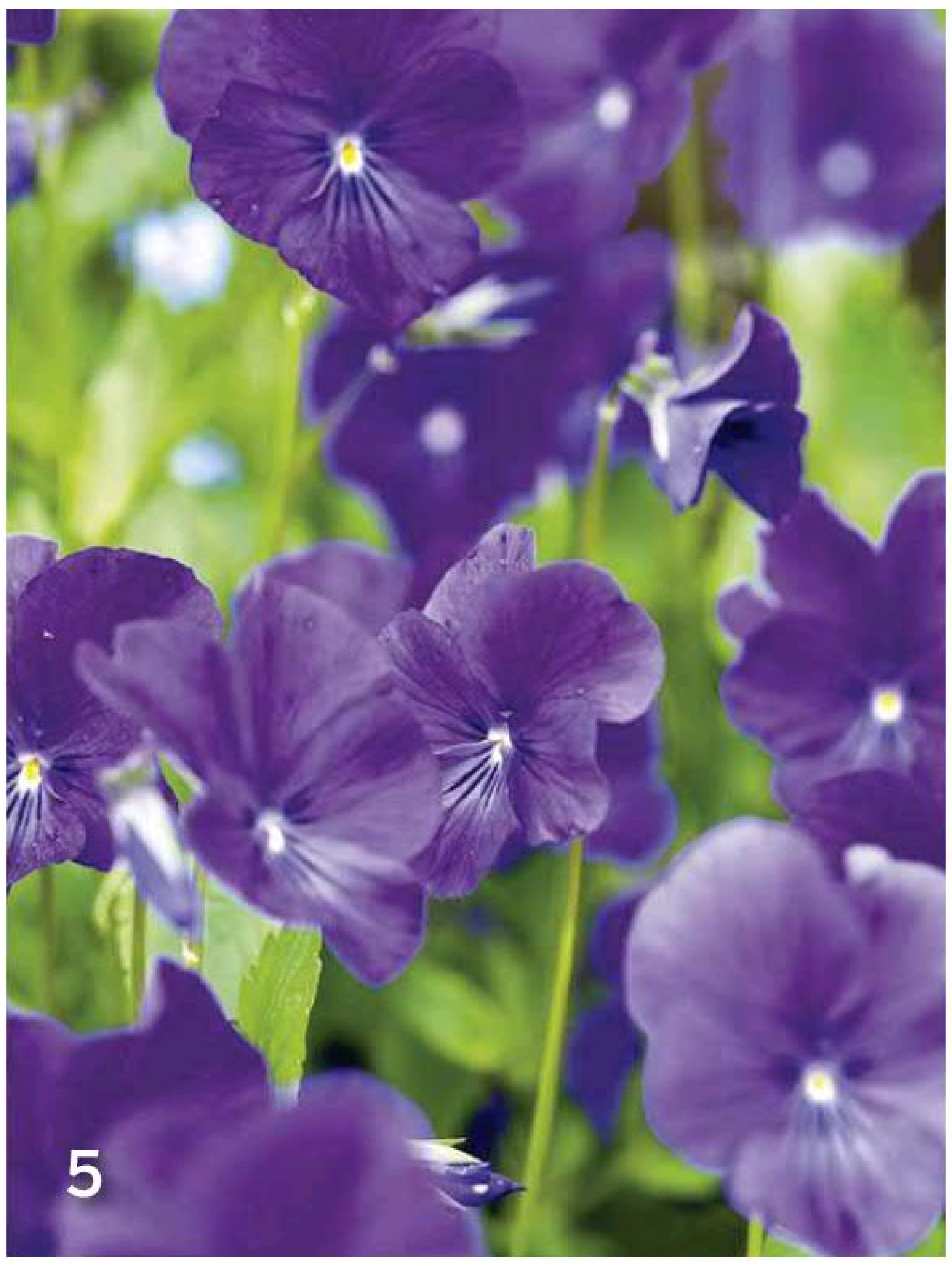
5 *Viola* 'Inverurie Beauty'
This superb scented pansy is a big favourite. It has long stems for picking, it climbs and it flowers from May to September. 50cm. AGM. RHS H5.

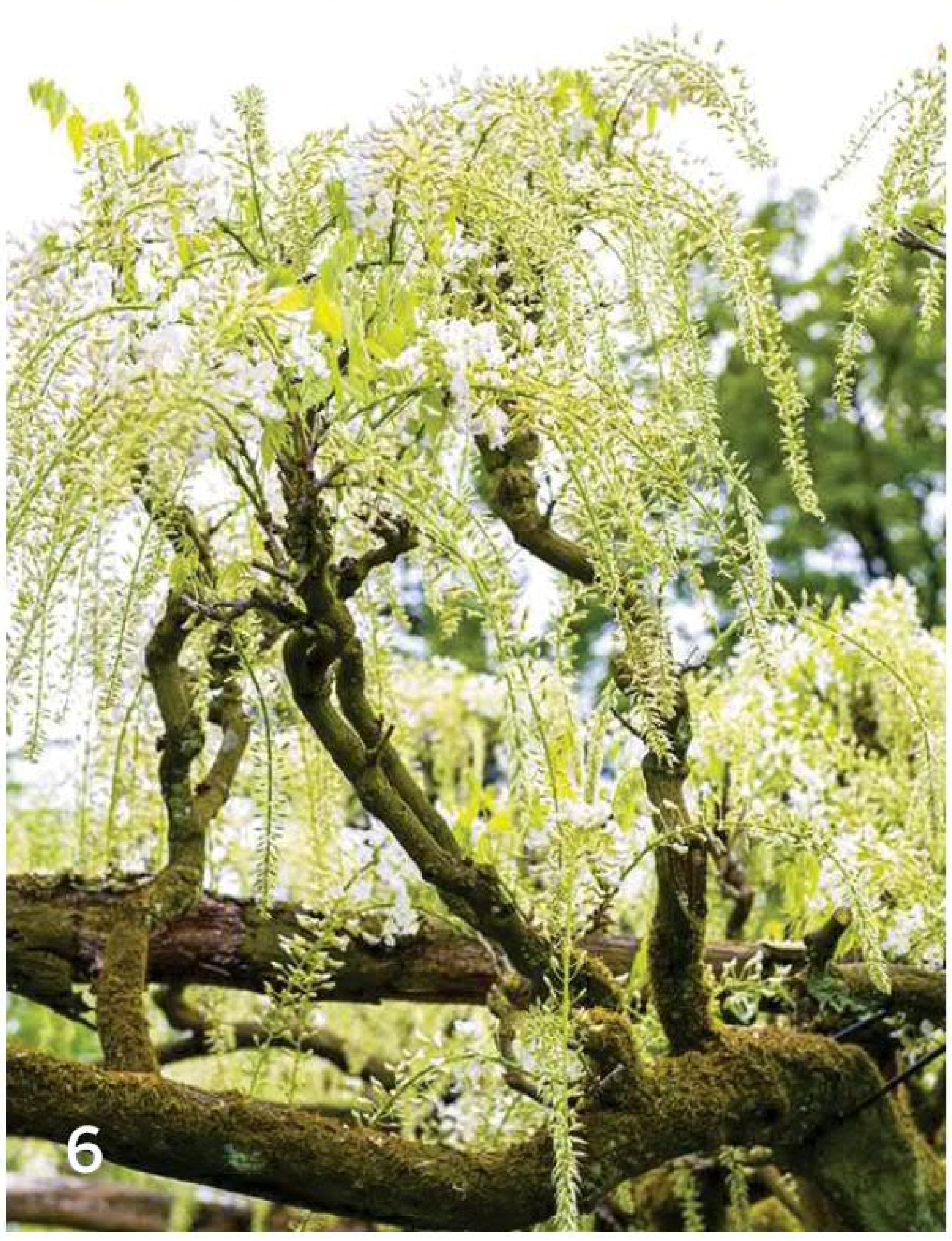












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11

12

6 *Wisteria floribunda* 'Alba'
This wisteria is heaven sent; we think it must be an especially brilliant clone. In May, on the walk beneath the pergola, it is staggering, both to see and inhale. 9m. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 5a-10b.

7 *Tulipa* 'Ile de France'
I love this tulip. A very pure, solid red that is late flowering, set off by the foliage of *Veratrum nigrum* and *Adiantum aleuticum*. And close by there is *Exochorda* x *macrantha* 'The Bride'. Red and green and white and all the different textures are so pleasing. 90cm. USDA 3a-8b.

8 *Narcissus poeticus*
This is a plant that takes us from spring to summer. In the wood and near the water it looks completely natural. I plant more every year and they increase slowly. 45cm. USDA 4a-11.

9 Oak and beech
This avenue of immensely tall oak and beech trees frame the statue of a discus thrower that was placed at the end of the broad walk by Peter's father WE Gatacre.

10 *Rhododendron* 'Alice de Stuers'
A plant chosen by, and named for, my mother-in-law – and one that is still in cultivation. It was Alice who created the sunken garden in 1913 and planted the bergenias, which have only recently been divided and replanted. 1.5m.

11 *Polystichum polyblepharum*
An evergreen fern that is tolerant of a wide temperature range and has a furry quality that makes it very endearing. 60cm. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 5b-9b.

12 *Paeonia delavayi* f. *lutea*
This peony is a very nice greeny-yellow and holds its own on the terrace by the house. 1.2m.

USEFUL INFORMATION
Address De Wiersse, Wiersserallee 9, 7251 LH Vorden, the Netherlands.
Tel +31 (0)573 451409.
Website dewiersse.nl/en
Open Open days for 2015 are: 14 May, 24-25 May, 19 July, 26 July and 18 October. The garden is also open on selected Thursdays and Saturdays from April to September. See website for details.

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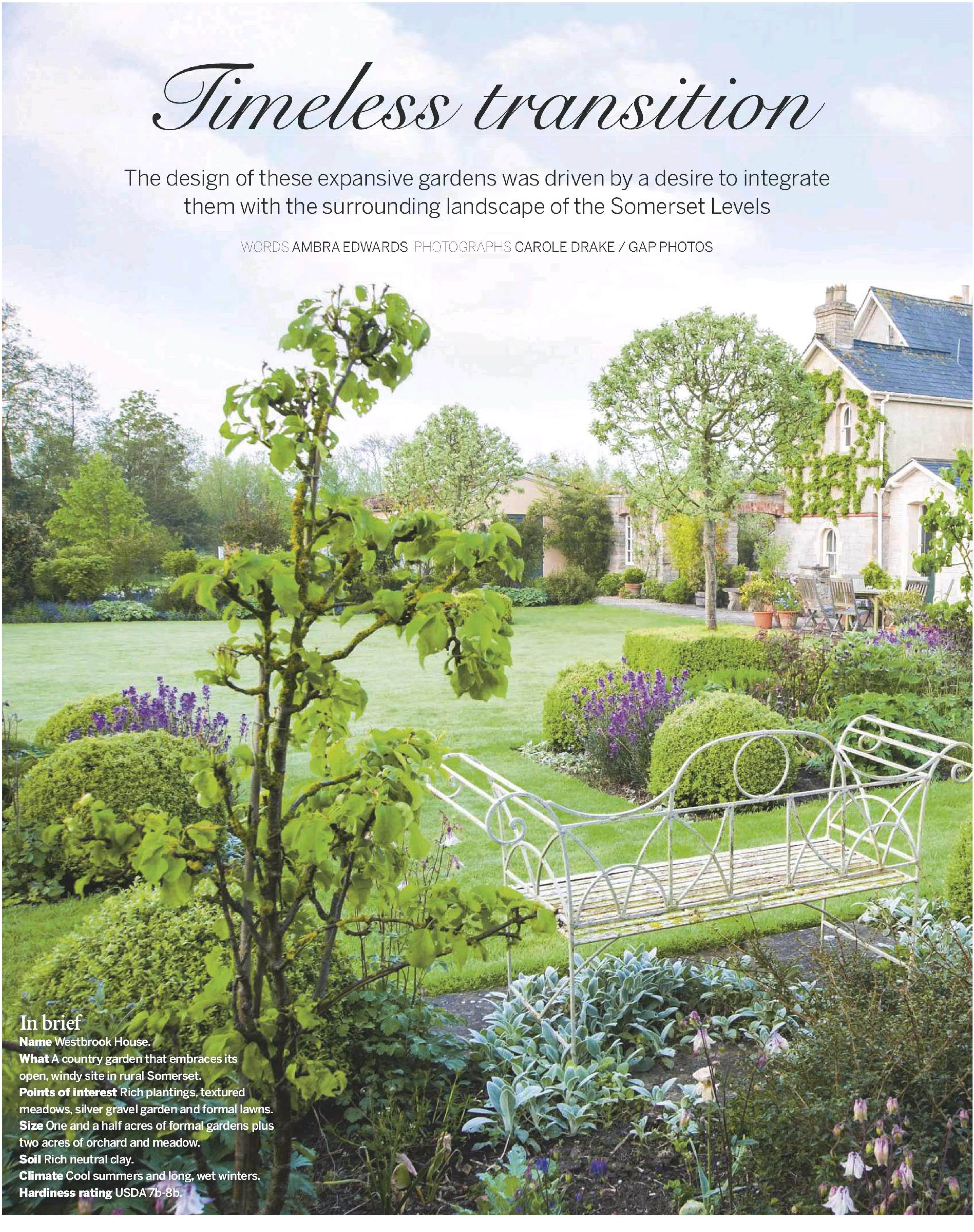
*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. †Hardiness ratings given where available.

Timeless transition

The design of these expansive gardens was driven by a desire to integrate them with the surrounding landscape of the Somerset Levels

WORDS AMBRA EDWARDS PHOTOGRAPHS CAROLE DRAKE / GAP PHOTOS



In brief

Name Westbrook House.
What A country garden that embraces its open, windy site in rural Somerset.
Points of interest Rich plantings, textured meadows, silver gravel garden and formal lawns.
Size One and a half acres of formal gardens plus two acres of orchard and meadow.
Soil Rich neutral clay.
Climate Cool summers and long, wet winters.
Hardiness rating USDA 7b-8b.

Only fruit trees are used in the garden behind the house, in order to forge a sense of connection with the orchards and meadows beyond.

To the west of the house, the space is divided into richly planted garden rooms.

Clipped box balls and a vintage-style bench offer punctuation points amid fulsome herbaceous planting.

The densely packed herbaceous borders, sheltered by sculpted hedges, provide a satisfying contrast to the adjacent lawns.

The entrance court, once a jousting ground of lurid conifers, is a silvery gravel garden, planted with sage and rosemary, velvety lambs' lugs and gleaming sea hollies

In the early months of 2014, the meadow and orchards at Westbrook House lay, like much of Somerset, under water. The lawn was a paddling pool. Mercifully, the house escaped unscathed. But for garden designer Keith Anderson and his partner David Mendel, it was a bittersweet time. For years they had been working at the perennial gardening problem of how to blend a house and garden successfully into the landscape; now their sense of being at one with the surrounding farmland was all too real.

Today, however, the brook that skirts the meadow is once again a limpid stream, fringed with ancient pollarded willows that frame long views out over lush pasture. Keith loves the spaciousness of the landscape, the big skies, the watery light. Brought up on an island in the Puget Sound, a stretch of sea off the northwestern coast of the USA, he's used to nature on the grandest scale – vast oceans, huge mountains, forests as far as the eye can see. David thinks this is what makes Keith so creative in the garden – that he's not hidebound by the English preoccupation with plant combinations that is the legacy of Gertrude Jekyll.

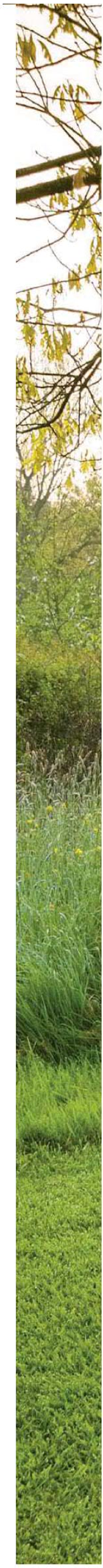
"Don't get me wrong – I'm a great admirer of Jekyll," insists Keith. Indeed, Keith and David's amiable dog is named Gertrude. And Jekyll, Keith points out, had a lot to say about the transition from formality to informality.

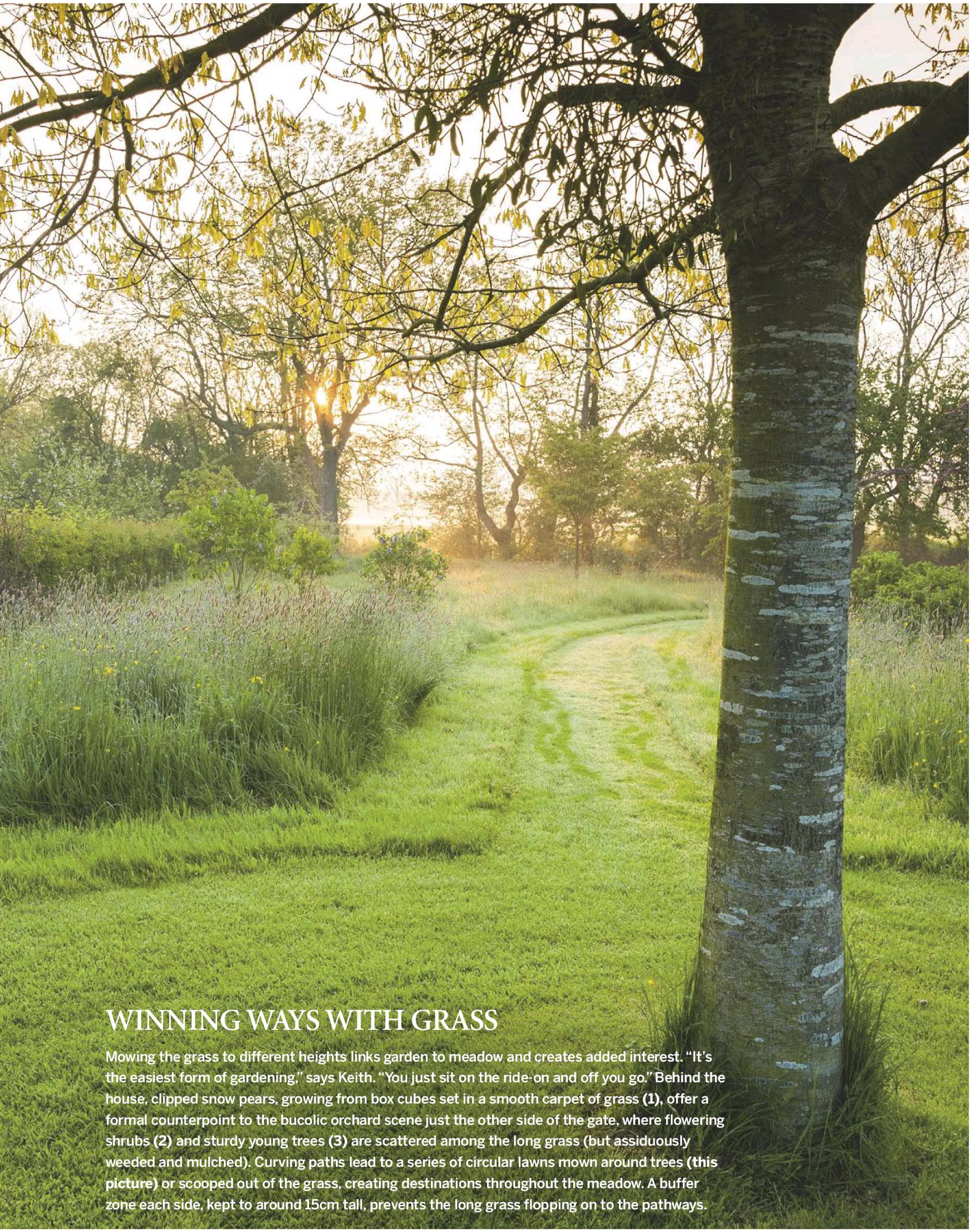
Keith's aim has been to create an easy progression between the more formal areas of garden, bounded by the handsome gabled house and the red brick walls of an old stable yard, and the open farmland beyond. To the front of the house, two densely packed and richly textured garden rooms open out on to a simple plantation of multi-stemmed amelanchiers. The entrance court, once a jousting ground of luridly coloured conifers, is now a silvery gravel garden, planted with sage and rosemary, velvety lambs' lugs and ▷

1 Formal lawn.

2 Meadow shrubs.

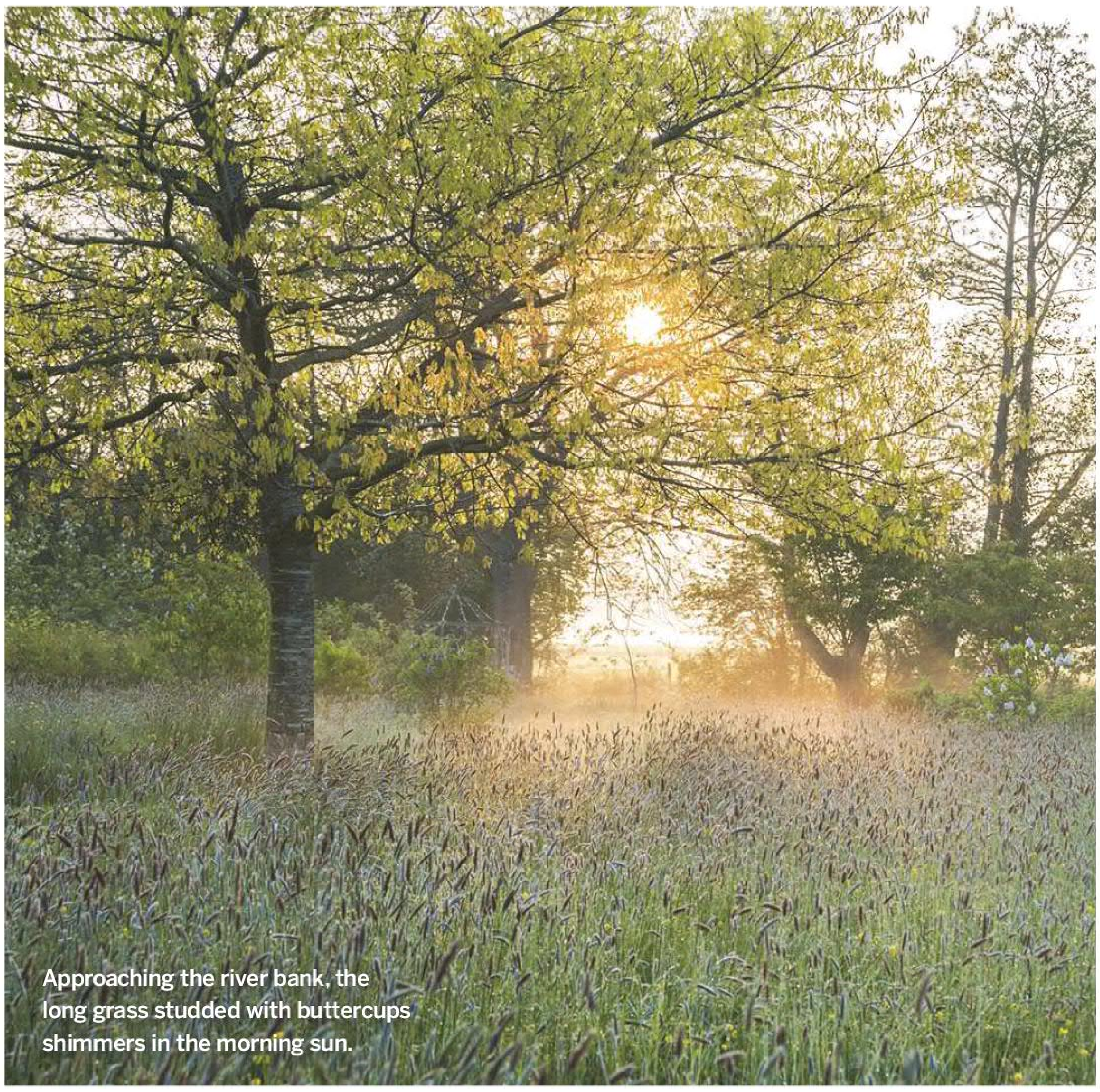
3 Transformed field.





WINNING WAYS WITH GRASS

Mowing the grass to different heights links garden to meadow and creates added interest. "It's the easiest form of gardening," says Keith. "You just sit on the ride-on and off you go." Behind the house, clipped snow pears, growing from box cubes set in a smooth carpet of grass **(1)**, offer a formal counterpoint to the bucolic orchard scene just the other side of the gate, where flowering shrubs **(2)** and sturdy young trees **(3)** are scattered among the long grass (but assiduously weeded and mulched). Curving paths lead to a series of circular lawns mown around trees **(this picture)** or scooped out of the grass, creating destinations throughout the meadow. A buffer zone each side, kept to around 15cm tall, prevents the long grass flopping on to the pathways.



Approaching the river bank, the long grass studded with buttercups shimmers in the morning sun.

▷ gleaming sea hollies. In the adjoining area, an exuberant froth of planting is held in check by orderly box balls, while headily scented *Trachelospermum jasminoides*, a mighty fig and exotic *Xanthoceras sorbifolium* take full advantage of warm walls, safe from the wind.

Behind the house lies a formal garden of deceptive simplicity, defined by snow pears (*Pyrus nivalis*) growing out of blocks of clipped box. "Having replanted the orchards, we decided that we would use only cherries, crab apples and pears in this area, to forge a sense of connection," explains David. "Anything exotic would look out of place here, and the pears respond well to clipping."

The sense of unity is reinforced by two parallel beds of *Rosa* 'Roseraie de l'Hay', leading the eye to a broad grass allée unrolling towards the river. Mowing the grass to different heights links formal lawn to flower-studded meadow and brings extra interest to a flat site. "It doesn't feel like it when you're in it," remarks Keith, "but it's actually a very formal arrangement." On the contrary, the atmosphere is all romance, with lilacs, viburnums and species roses flowering in the long grass among sheets of buttercups and camassias. Between them, narrow paths lead to secret close-mown clearings, where David is often to be found hidden away with a book. "Once the grass grows up, you can't see out, and nobody can see in: it's like a little nest."

As the days grow longer, increasingly the pair find themselves drawn out into the meadow. David, a painter, is entranced by the subtle and ever-changing colours of the grasses. For Keith, it is a balm to lie quietly amid the rustle and birdsong, and watch the clouds scudding across the sky. "What started as a desire to link with the landscape in a respectful and effective manner," he reflects, "has taken on a powerful life of its own." □

USEFUL INFORMATION

Address Westbrook House, West Bradley, Glastonbury, Somerset BA6 8LS.
Tel 01458 850604.
Website westbrook-bed-breakfast.co.uk
Open Westbrook House offers country house bed and breakfast to garden lovers. The garden may also be visited by appointment.

8 of David (left) and Keith's favourite plants

1 *Veronica gentianoides*
Understated and elegant, with its dainty spires of soft blue, this is a firm favourite that recurs throughout the garden. 45cm. RHS H6†.

2 *Deutzia* x *kalmiiflora*
With nodding two-tone pink flowers, fine red stalks and handsome mid-green foliage, this easy shrub is an excellent all-rounder. 1.5m. RHS H5, USDA 5a-8b.

3 *Erysimum* 'Bowles's Mauve'
Never be snobby about common plants, counsels Keith. This vigorous and joyously coloured wallflower is an asset in any garden. 50cm. AGM*. RHS H4, USDA 5a-9b.

4 *Xanthoceras sorbifolium*
Trained as a wall shrub, this exotic Chinese tree is a fabulous sight in May, bearing heavy sprays of fragrant white flowers. 3m. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 4a-8b.

5 *Philadelphus coronarius* 'Variegatus'
The sight of the emerging leaves is one of Keith's great delights in the spring – a perfect partner for the pears and hostas. 2m. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 5a-10b.

6 *Viburnum opulus* 'Roseum'
Sturdy shrub laden with 'snowballs' of white flower – the perfect bridging plant between the cultivated and the wild. 2.5-4m. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.

7 *Pyrus nivalis*
Graceful but robust and serviceable tree, amenable to shaping, with attractive soft, silvery young foliage and abundant white blossom. 8m. RHS H6.

8 *Omphalodes cappadocica* 'Cherry Ingram'
Starry flowers of singing blue. It was chosen to honour the famous plantsman Collingwood 'Cherry' Ingram, who was the grandfather of one of Westbrook's previous occupants. 50cm. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 6a-9b.

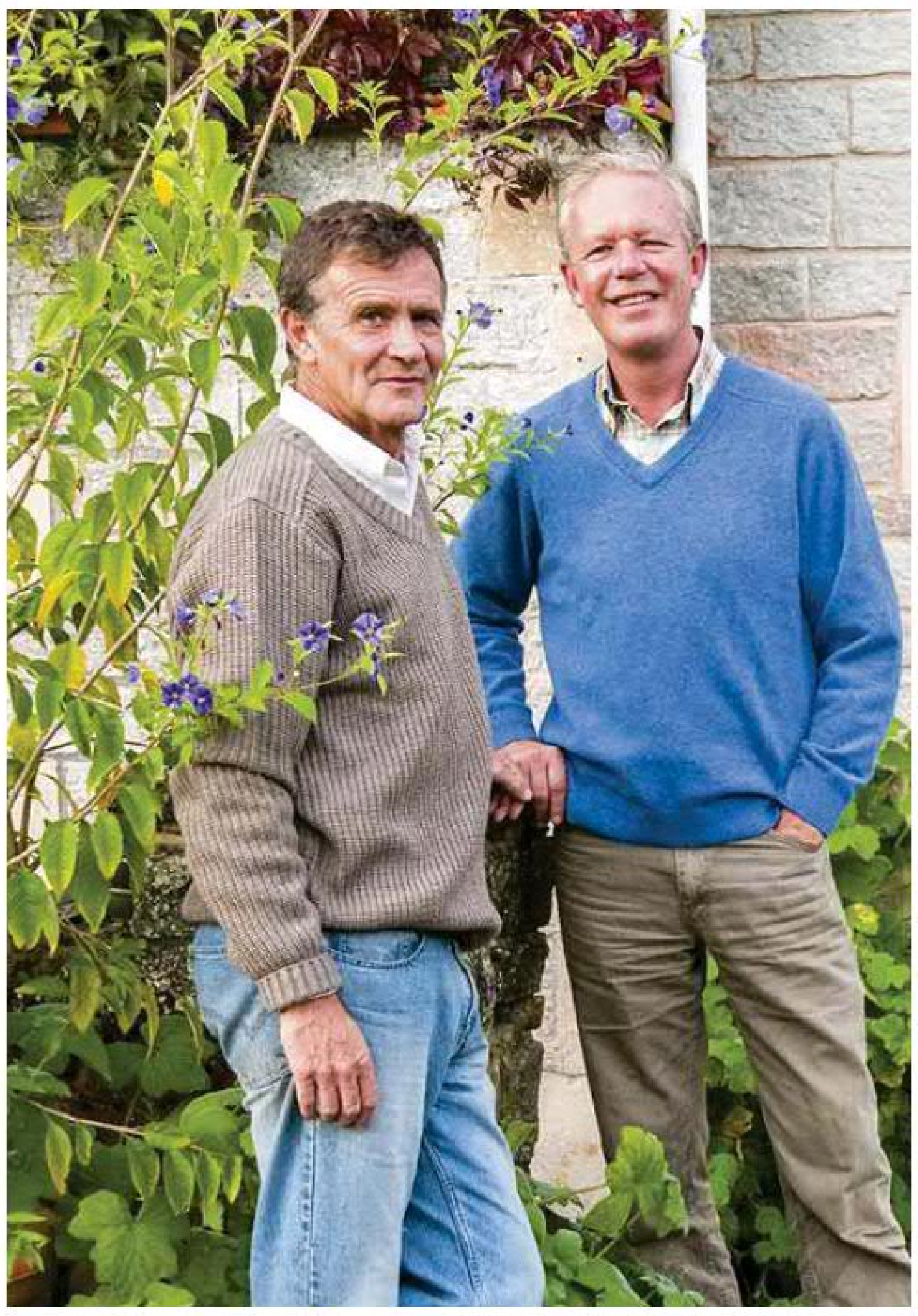
*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society.
†Hardiness ratings given where available.

1

2

3

4



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GI 05.15

design

Design update and sourcebook

UPDATE COMPILED BY ANNIE GATTI

NEW BOOK

Sustainable gardens

Australian landscape designer Phillip Johnson's seven-acre (2.8ha) mountain home in the Dandenong Ranges, Victoria is set in an amphitheatre of *Eucalyptus regnans*, with an understorey of tree ferns and other natives. Rainwater is harnessed in two pools, fed by waterfalls. It was the inspiration for Phillip's 2013 Trailfinders garden at Chelsea, which won Best in Show. This garden and 19 other designs that all have sustainability at their heart are explored in a new book about Phillip's work, *Connected* (Murdoch Books, £25).

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First glimpse

When Sir Clough Williams-Ellis designed the garden for Broad Heath House near Presteigne in Powys in 1925, he also remodelled the house to create a harmony between the two. A beautiful loggia connects the house to an Italianate sunken garden that leads to a secret garden enclosed by yew hedging with a well head at its centre. The garden is open for the NGS for the first time on 23 and 30 May and 6 June, and by appointment. **Tel 07887 556419, ngs.org.uk**

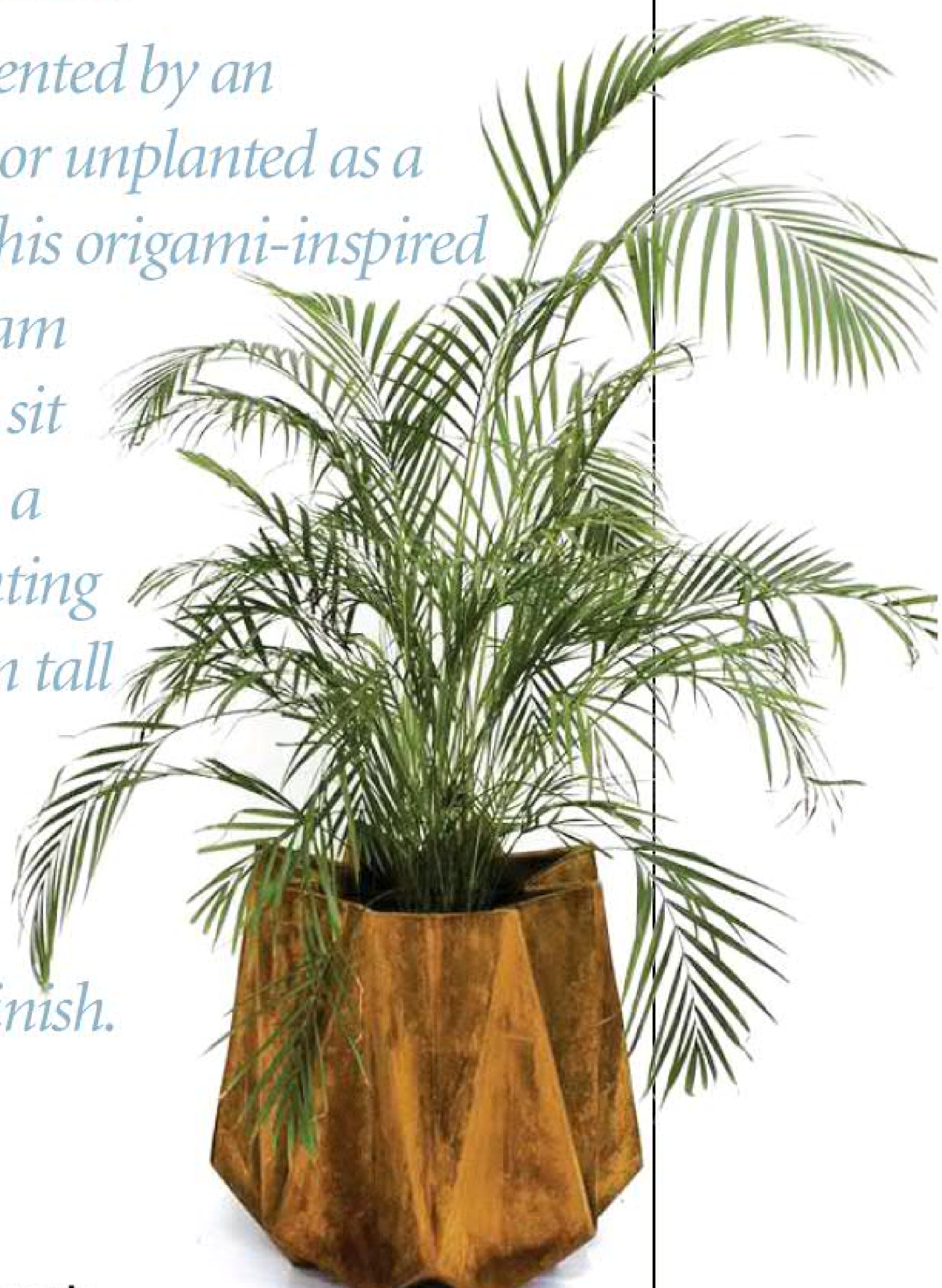
TOWN SQUARE

Urban sanctuary

A new development on the site of a former Royal Mail building at Rathbone Place in London's Fitzrovia will feature a public square with a lawn framed by woodland planting, water features and a series of geometric raised beds. The garden, which is landscaped by Gustafson Porter, will be open to the public and is due to be completed by 2017.

FOLDING FEATURES

Whether complemented by an architectural plant or unplanted as a piece of sculpture, this origami-inspired pot by designer Adam Christopher would sit particularly well in a contemporary planting scheme. The Kronen tall flower pot is made from reinforced concrete and has a Corten steel effect finish.

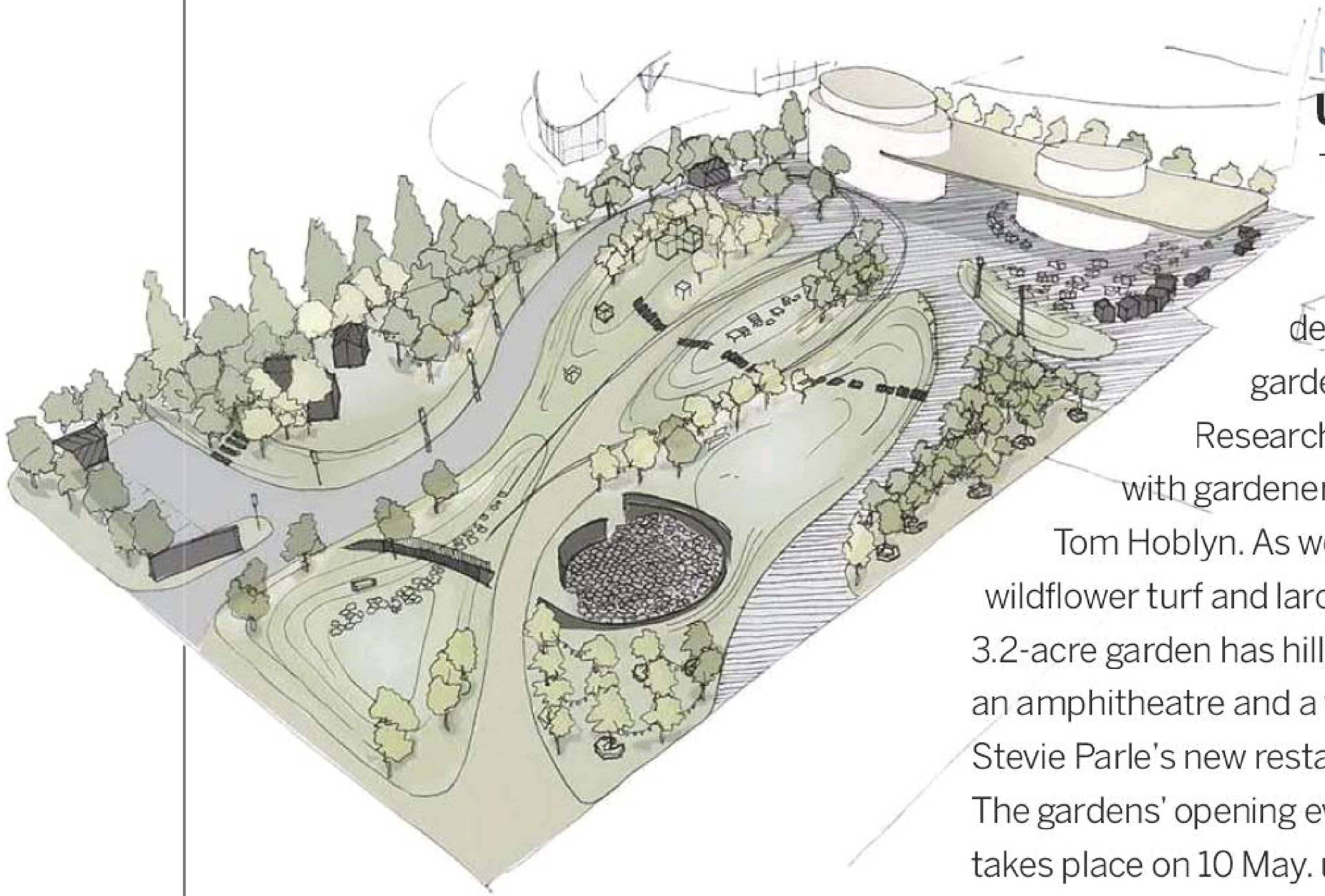


65cm high, 67cm wide, weighs 30kg; £289.
Tel 07793 049863,
adamchristopherdesign.co.uk

LANDSCAPE AWARD

Poolside in Provence

Designer James Basson has won a gold in the biennial French landscape awards, Les Victoires du Paysage, in the category for private gardens of 500 square metres or less. His brief for the Provençal garden was to incorporate a swimming pool, play space and drought-tolerant planting, while retaining the character of the property. **scapedesign.com**



NEW PARK

Urban oasis

The new, public Peninsula Gardens, in Greenwich, south London, has been designed as a biodiverse wild garden by Tom Dixon's Design Research Studio, in collaboration with gardener Alys Fowler and designer Tom Hoblyn. As well as orchards, areas of wildflower turf and larch and alder trees, the 3.2-acre garden has hills for children to roll down, an amphitheatre and a vegetable garden to supply Stevie Parle's new restaurant there, Craft London. The gardens' opening event, the Urban Village Fete, takes place on 10 May. **urbanvillagefete.co.uk**

SOWING SEEDS

Instant meadow

Wildflower Turf, the company that supplied the London 2012 Olympics, has brought out a new product, Wildflower Earth, a soil that's pre-seeded with the correct amount of wild flowers to ensure successful coverage. Ideal for bespoke meadow creation on large sites, it is a cheaper option than turf, although sites will require spraying off with a systemic herbicide before Wildflower Earth can be spread. From £7.50 per sq m. **Tel 01256 771222**, **wildflowerturf.co.uk**

Notebook

- Expect to see lots of interesting ideas for attracting wildlife to the garden in the three selected show gardens that will be judged by James Alexander-Sinclair and Kevin McCloud at **Grand Designs Live**. 2-10 May, Excel, London. Tel 0844 854 1348, granddesignslive.com
- See the ongoing restoration of a rare example of a curvilinear iron glasshouse at Wildegoose Nursery's Viola Open Day on 3 May, in the walled garden at **Millichope Park**, Shropshire. When completed, the glasshouse will host courses and lectures. boutsviolas.co.uk
- Garden designer Dawn Isaac leads a one-day course on **Designing Family Gardens** on 5 May at Cambridge University Botanic Garden, while on 22 May, Dr Twiggs Way discusses the landscapes of 'Capability' Brown. botanic.cam.ac.uk
- The 10th Jardins en Fête held in the grounds of the **Château de Coppet** on the shores of Lake Geneva, and featuring more than 120 exhibitors, takes place 8-10 May. jardinsenfete.ch/en/
- An evening celebrating the life and influence of Sir Cedric Morris, with his former pupil Maggi Hambling, biographer Janet Waymark and gardener Sarah Cook, who now holds the National Collection of Iris introduced by Morris, takes place at **Garden Museum**, London, on 13 May, 6.30pm. Book online at gardenmuseum.org.uk

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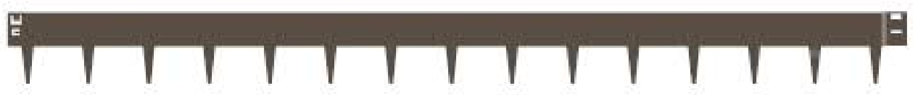

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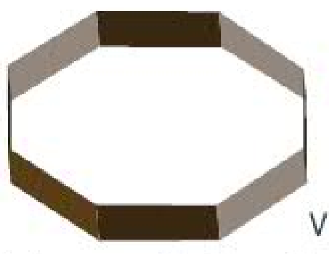

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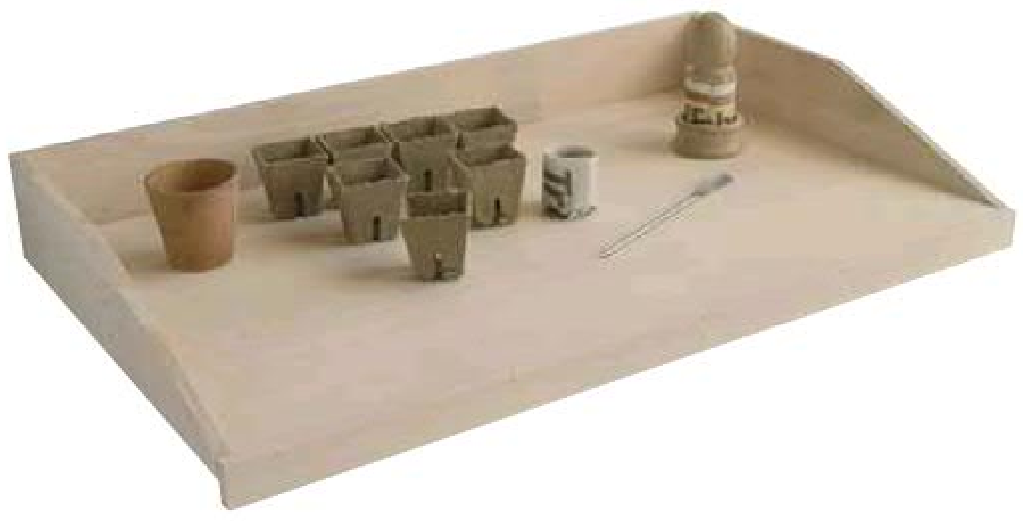

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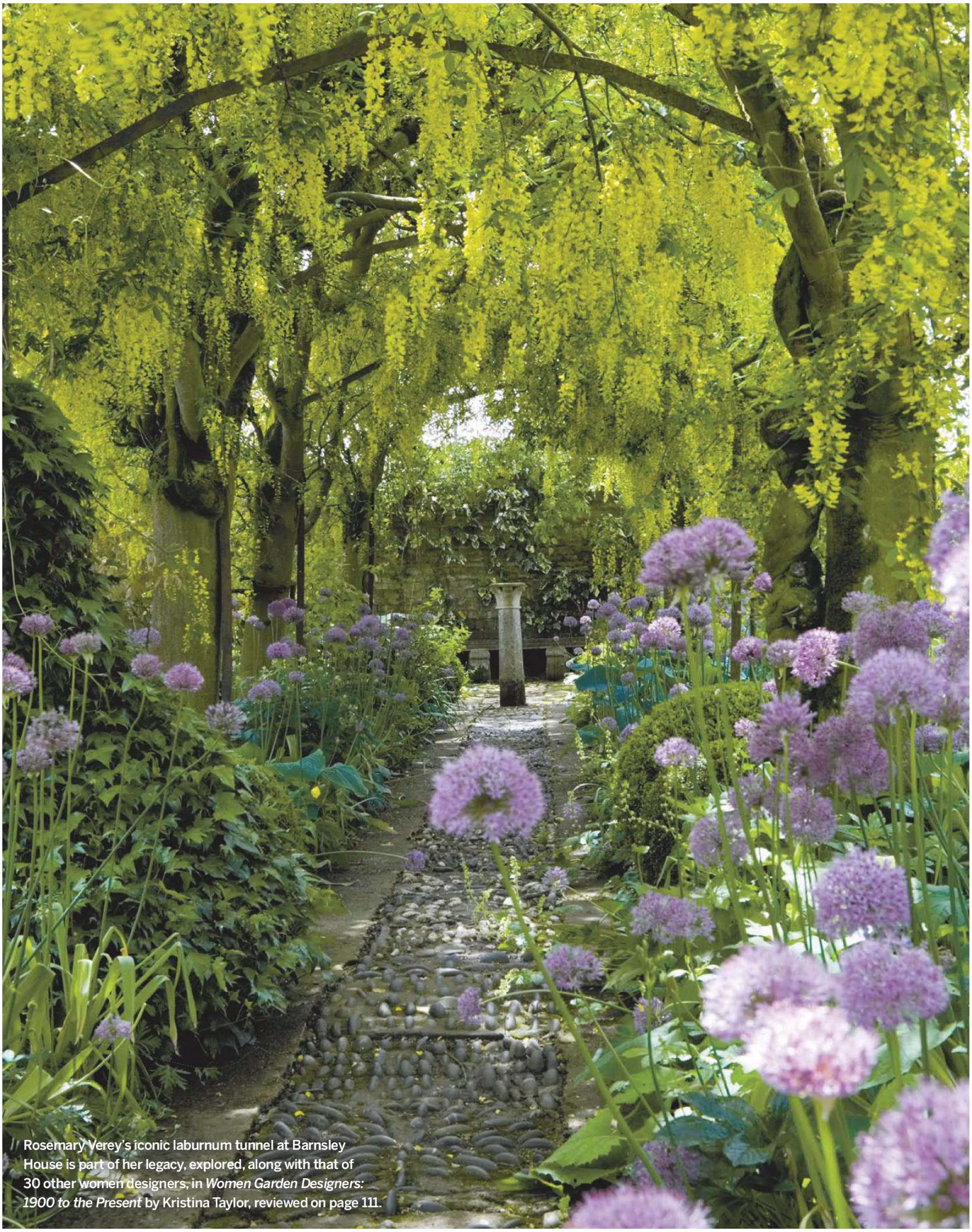

Rosemary Verey's iconic laburnum tunnel at Barnsley House is part of her legacy, explored, along with that of 30 other women designers, in *Women Garden Designers: 1900 to the Present* by Kristina Taylor, reviewed on page 111.

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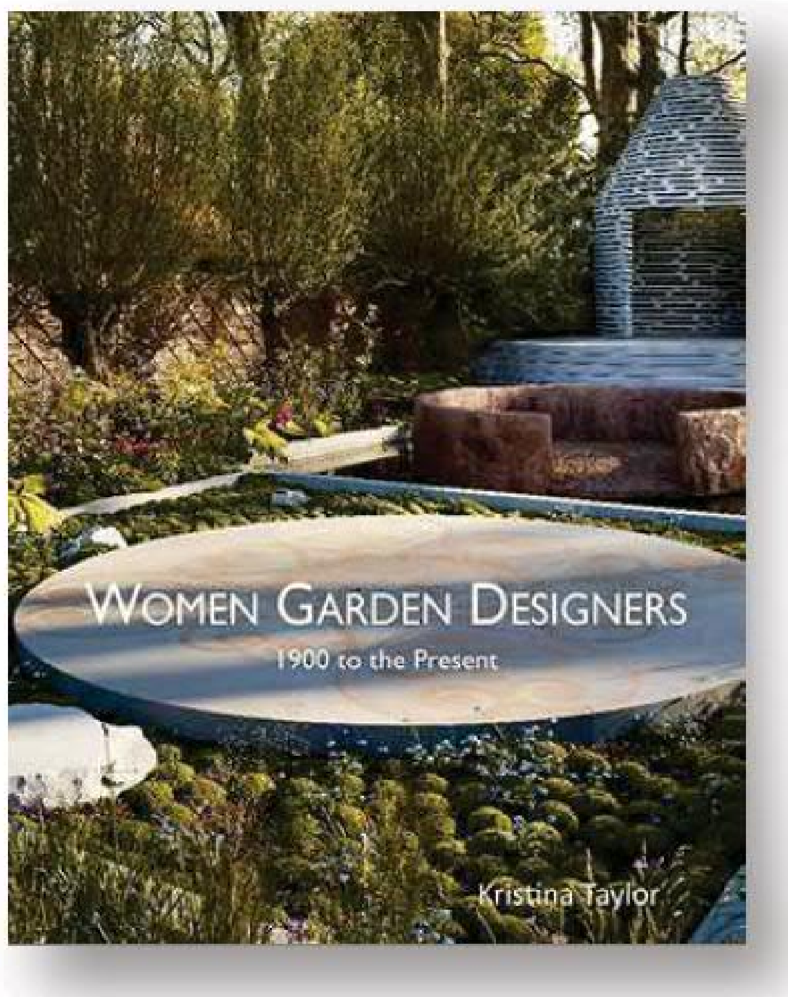
Book reviews



WOMEN GARDEN DESIGNERS: 1900 TO THE PRESENT

by Kristina Taylor

Garden Art Press, £35
ISBN 978-1870673815

An introduction to the lives and key commissions of 31 influential female garden designers from around the world.

Reviewer Paula McWaters is a gardening writer and editor.

It's one of life's mysteries that the contribution of women to gardening has not been more celebrated, especially in design, where their considerable achievements have all too often gone unnoticed.

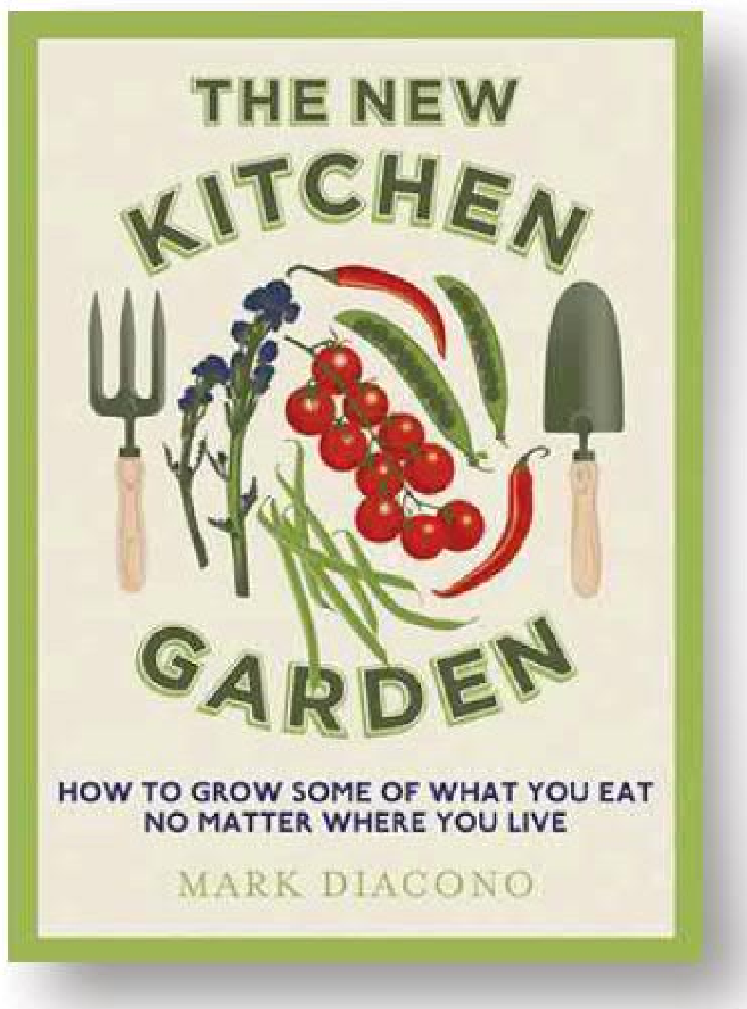
Author Kristina Taylor wonders whether women's attitudes towards the land, and the way they interact with it, is different from that of men. She looks at 31 female designers, half of whom are British or American (11 other nations are represented) and arranges them chronologically, starting with Gertrude Jekyll (b 1843) and ending with contemporary Japanese designer Haruko Seki and British Jinny Blom. To define their style, the author talks us through a selection of their commissions. Here sub-headings or clearer captioning would have made it easier to connect the text with the relevant photographs.

However, I enjoyed comparing their contrasting styles, from the flamboyance of Norah Lindsay to the restrained formality of Florence Yoch's work (her design for Il Brolino in California is sublime). It is interesting to trace the common threads that link these women. Many, including the Brazilian Isabel Duprat, developed their deep love of plants at an early age. Travel was an enormous influence, too, prompting the exploration of new and innovative ways of working. Many faced struggle, whether with lack of funds or in some cases, finding appropriate training in the first place, and determination was required to win over male colleagues and employees. It would have been interesting to learn more about how the latter was achieved.

It's good to have a book that attempts to set the record straight on women's achievements by showcasing and honouring some of the world's most talented female garden and landscape designers.

Book offer

RRP £35. **Reader offer price £31.50** including p&p*.



THE NEW KITCHEN GARDEN: HOW TO GROW SOME OF WHAT YOU EAT NO MATTER WHERE YOU LIVE

by Mark Diacono

Saltyard Books, £25
ISBN 978-1444734782

Delicious ideas for growing all the food you love without letting your vegetable patch take over the whole of your garden.

Reviewer Jodie Jones is a garden writer.

This is not Mark Diacono's first book. It isn't even his first kitchen gardening book, but he may have scuppered any chance of future publications because it is hard to know what else he might add to this comprehensive volume.

Mark once headed up the team that grow Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall's veg at River Cottage, and he now blogs about life on his 17-acre smallholding at Otter Farm in Devon. He also writes like a dream, and has a stack of awards to prove it.

Here, he sets out a simple premise – grow what you would like to eat in a way that won't overwhelm you or your garden.

His emphasis is on things that are expensive or impossible to buy in the shops, on the fruit and veg that only taste truly sublime when eaten the second they've been picked, and on the 'transformers' that can elevate the taste of other ingredients.

It is an inspiring call to the uninitiated, supported by all the basic information a novice needs to get started, from pricking out to composting (plus a stout defence of the radish as the veg virgin's first crop). But there are also some fascinatingly esoteric suggestions for experienced kitchen gardeners looking to expand their repertoire.

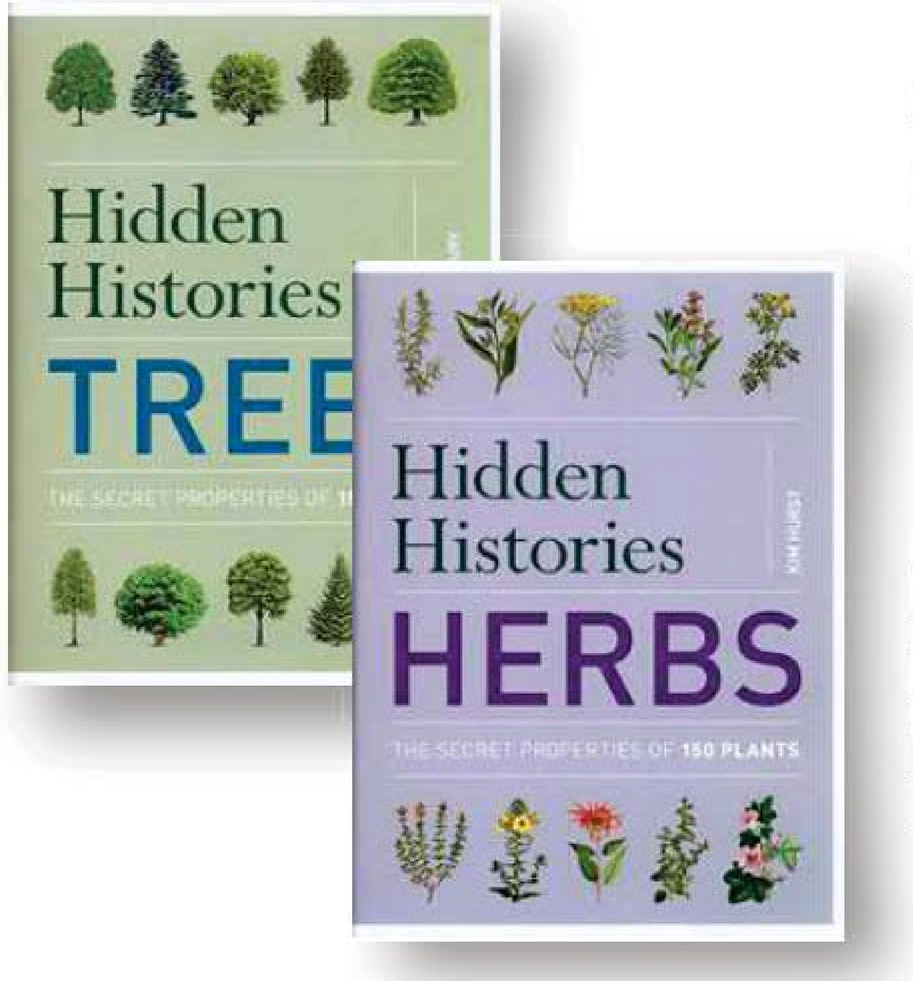
Naturally, he has some wise words on tomatoes (grow 'Sungold') and sprinkles violas and calendula petals on salads that may well also include hemerocallis buds and young dandelions. However, he also grows his own quinoa and Szechuan pepper and offers advice on cooking ostrich fern shoots and Solomon's seal.

The message seems to boil down to the fact that almost anything is delicious cooked with olive oil, garlic and lemon, and everything else is fantastic in cocktails. In fact, cocktails are a recurring theme – perhaps a clue about the next book to come out of Otter Farm?

Book offer

RRP £25. **Reader offer price £20** including p&p.

Book reviews



HIDDEN NATURAL HISTORIES: TREES

by Noël Kingsbury
Timber Press, £14.99
ISBN 978-0226282213

HIDDEN NATURAL HISTORIES: HERBS

by Kim Hurst
Timber Press, £14.99
ISBN 978-0226271170

Two books that explore, separately, the culinary, medicinal, cosmetic and spiritual properties of 150 trees and herbs.

Reviewer Matt Biggs is a gardener, author and TV presenter.

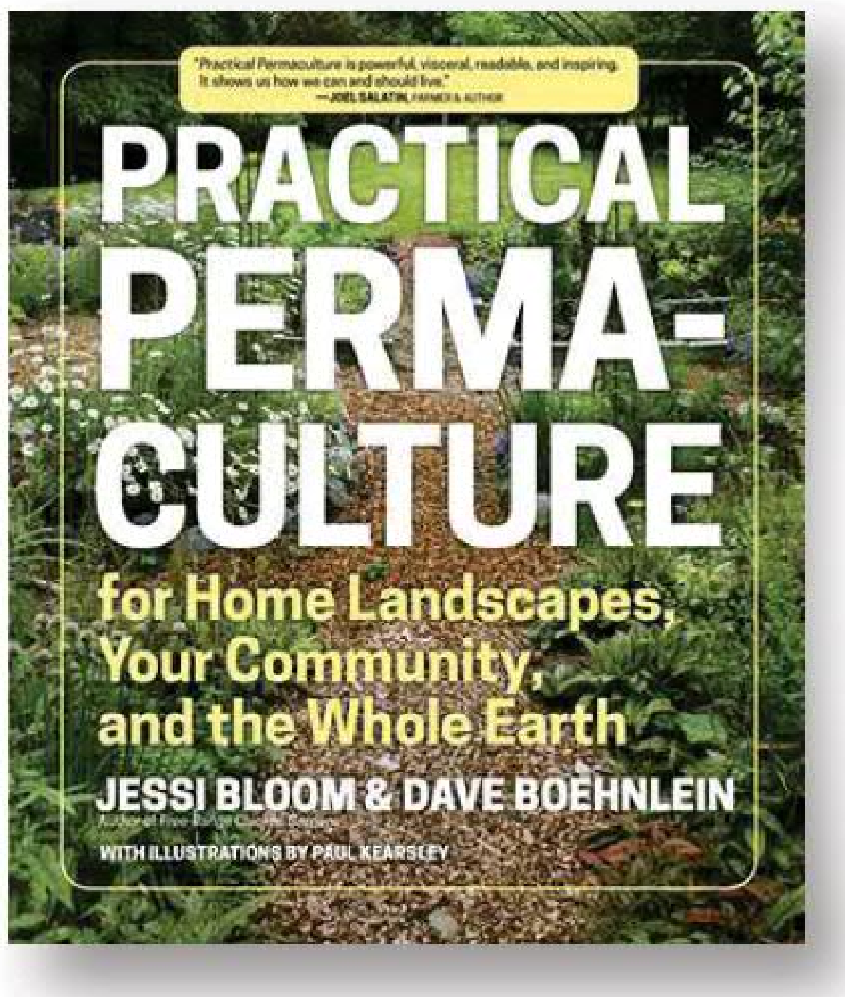
We are well aware of the ornamental and culinary value of plants, but often overlook their other roles in our lives; they are part of our folklore and culture and we depend on them for survival.

These two titles reveal the hidden and often unexpected day-to-day uses of some 150 temperate and tropical trees and herbs. Early entries set the tone, as you discover which pine provides the resin for the invisible mend on car windscreens and that the leaves of 'Sweet Flag' (*Acorus calamus*) were used to flavour creams and custards. Page after page of these delightful books are packed with fascinating and surprising facts showing how plants are unconsciously interwoven with our lives through their role in areas such as medicines, food, construction, craft and cosmetics.

Information is presented as a series of descriptive panels, delivering easily digestible facts, with key notes on cultivation and in the book on trees, their height and width at maturity, so you can decide if there is room to grow them in your garden. The text on each plant is accompanied by beautiful botanical paintings, which not only aid identification but are of a standard worthy of a coffee table book or old herbal. They also create a sense of the history of our relationship with plants.

These concise reference books are ideal to dip into, though the print is rather small, largely because of the volume of information that is packed in to each page. They would appeal to anyone interested in the past and present uses of plants and would be perfect for anyone compiling gardening quizzes, or who takes pleasure in accumulating fascinating facts. On a more serious note, they also remind the reader, that without plants, we would not survive.

No offer on either of these titles, but both are available from the *Gardens Illustrated* Bookshop, see page 115 for details.


PRACTICAL PERMA-CULTURE
for Home Landscapes, Your Community, and the Whole Earth
JESSI BLOOM & DAVE BOEHNLEIN

PRACTICAL PERMACULTURE FOR HOME LANDSCAPES, YOUR COMMUNITY AND THE WHOLE EARTH

by Jessi Bloom and Dave Boehnlein

Timber Press, £20
ISBN 978-1604694437

A great introduction to the subject – and will no doubt become your own centre for alternative technology on a bookshelf.

Reviewer Andy Hamilton is a writer, forager and brewer.

If you are new to permaculture then the opening chapter will certainly help you understand its meaning and some of its principles. 'It is a meeting of human needs through ecological and regenerative design,' say its American authors Bloom and Boehnlein. They go on to tell us that permaculture is a term first coined by Bill Mollison and David Holmgren in the 1970s. The name comes from joining the words permanent and culture, and for me it feels like an evolution of organic gardening principles.

As you can imagine with this type of book the style and tone can often be a little self righteous and sometimes it feels as if you are reading a manifesto rather than a non-fiction book. However, once the book gets going this ebbs to something more solid.

In the first section it covers the basics of permaculture design, including how to learn from nature and how to implement these designs into your own 'space'. Then it breaks down these systems into soil, water, waste, energy, shelter, food and animals, again with examples of how to implement change in your own life and space. Lastly, there is a section that reads like an extended appendix, with plant recommendations and further reading.

It was the practical examples of permaculture systems that I really enjoyed. For example, anything from annual vegetables to fruit bushes will thrive in the ten years or more it can take for a nut tree to establish itself. I would never have thought to use a trees understory in this way and the book is full of this sort of lateral thinking.

It is a good book for those interested in the subject, it will be your very own centre for alternative technology on a bookshelf.

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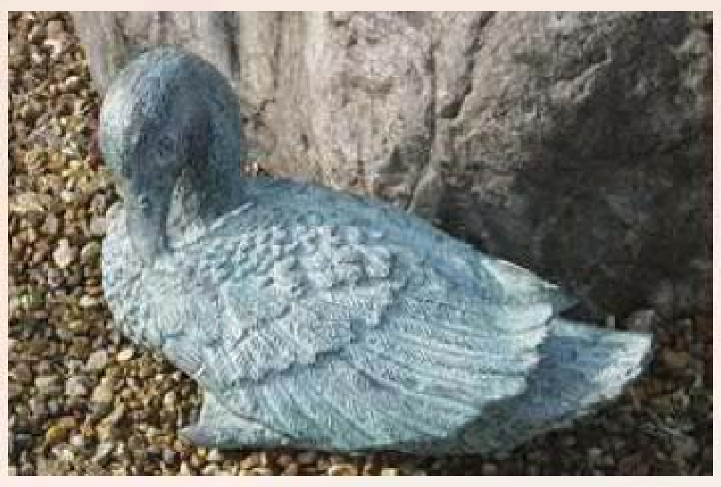
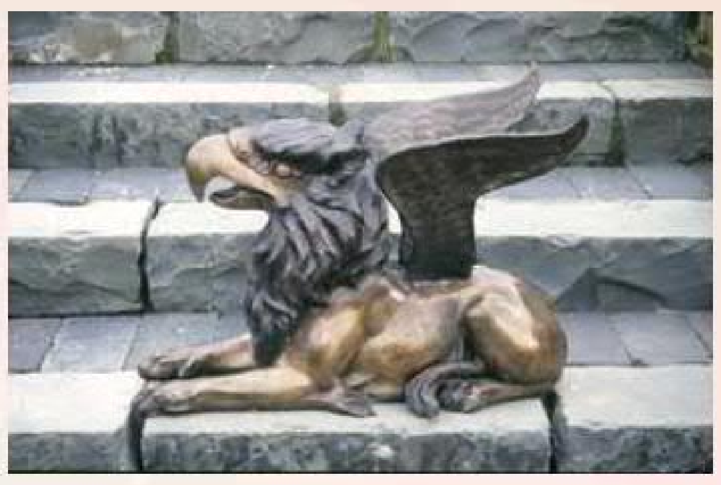
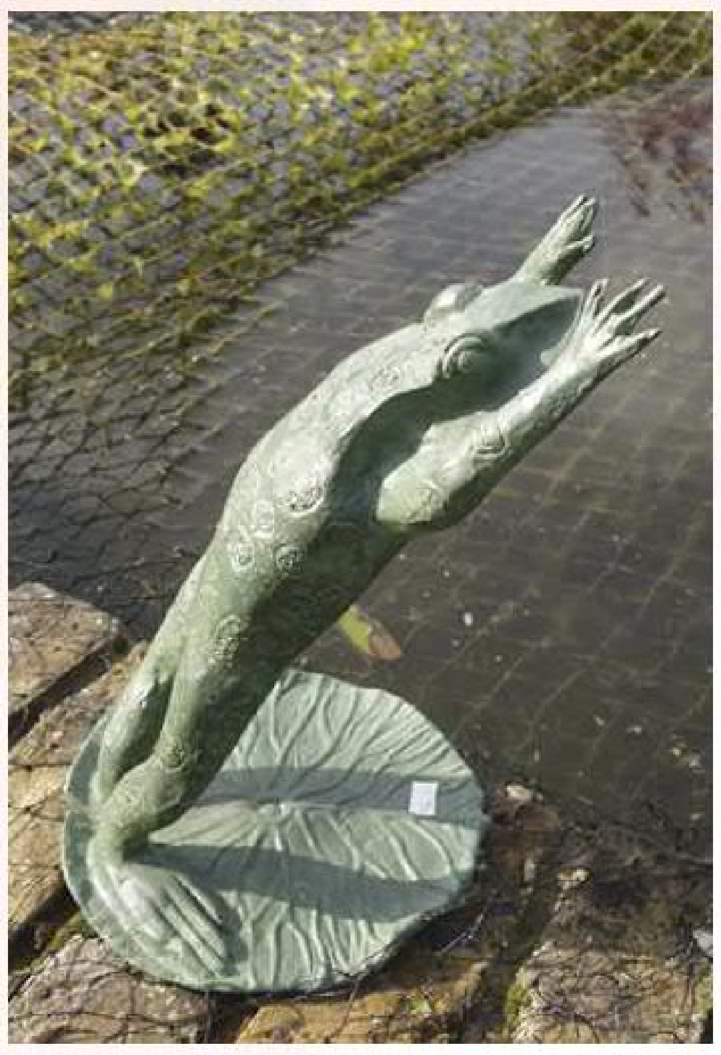


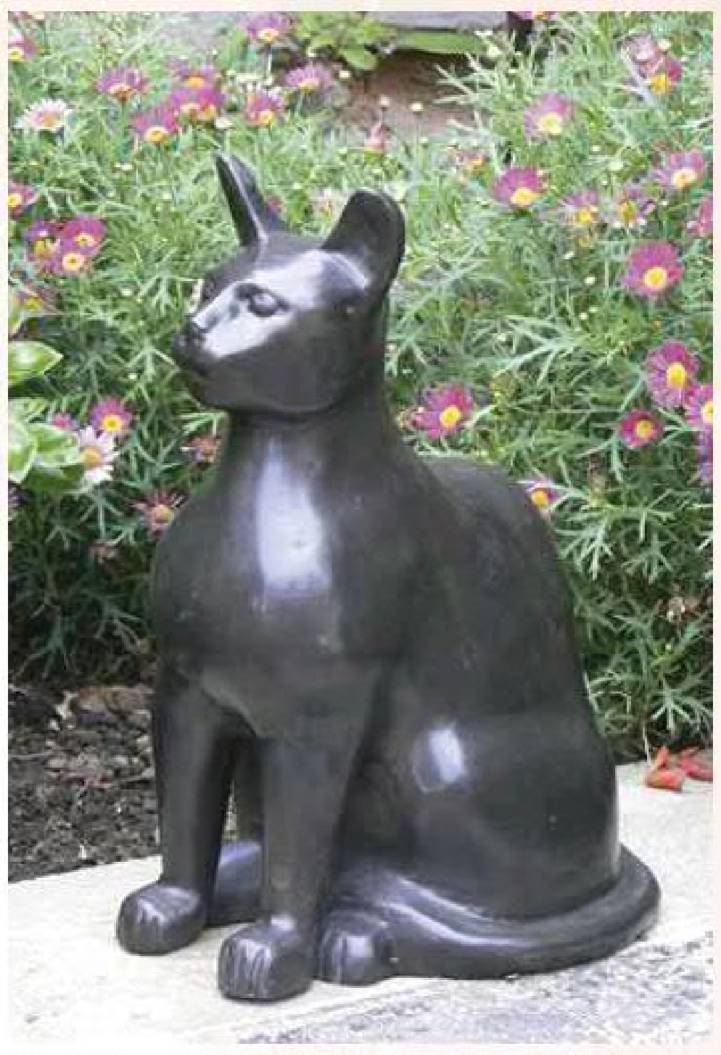
Duck one wing open 32 cms long



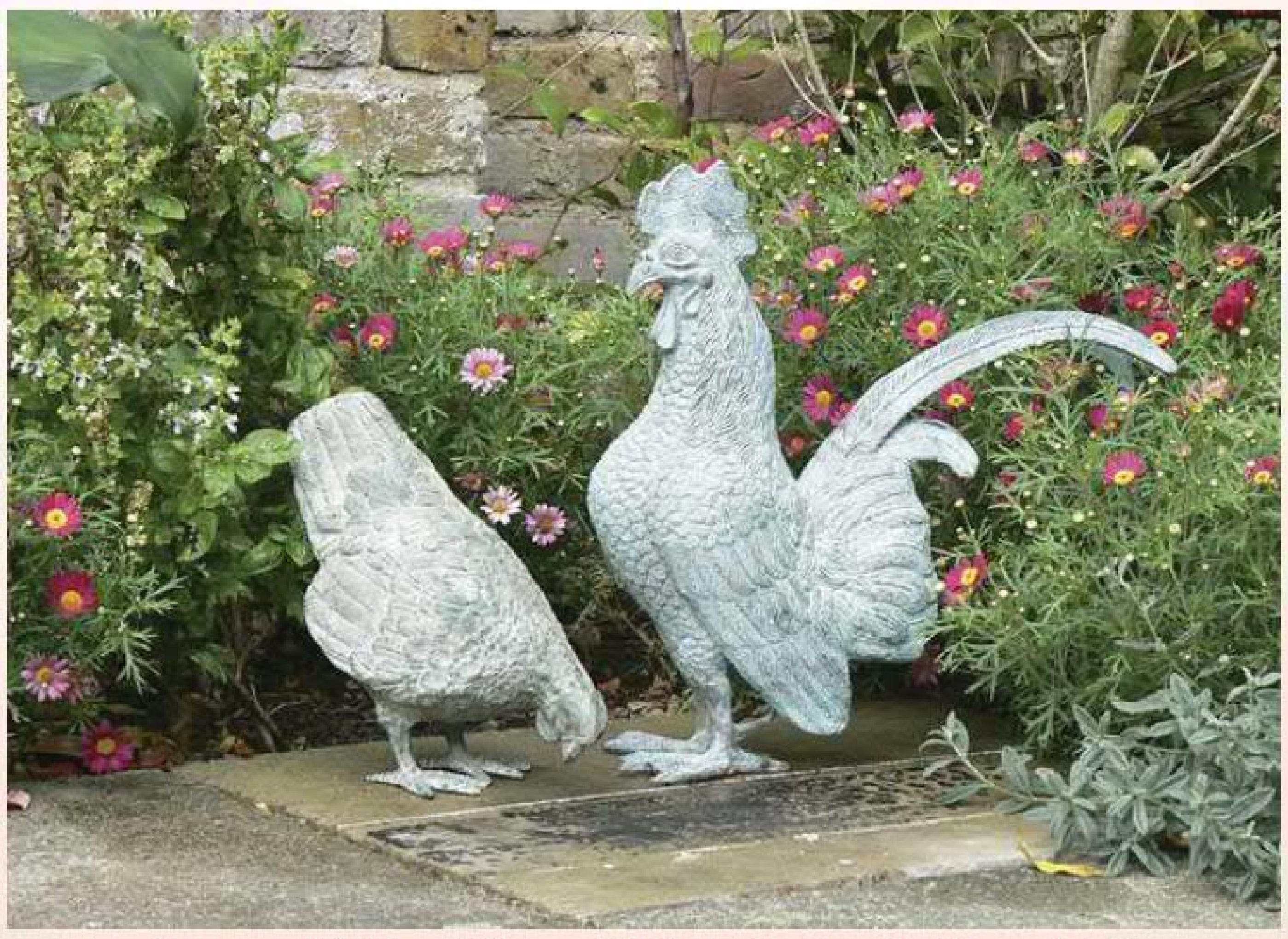
Griffin 72 cms long



Frog Jumping 23 cms high



Egyptian Cat 38 cms high



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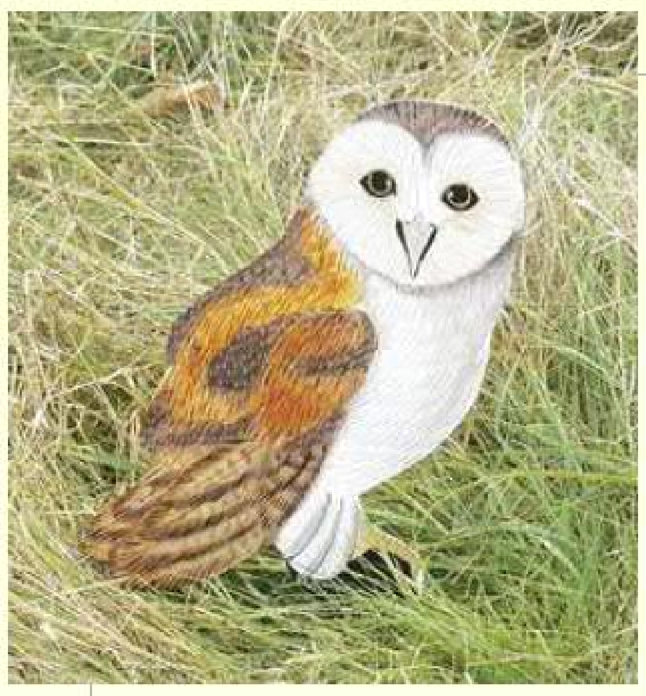

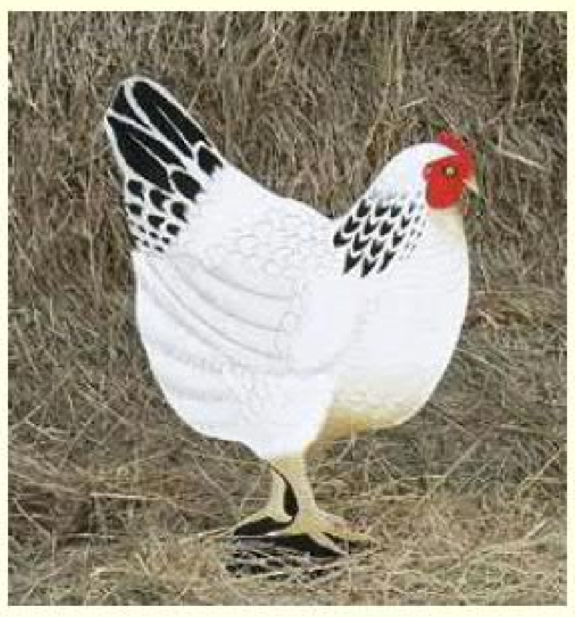

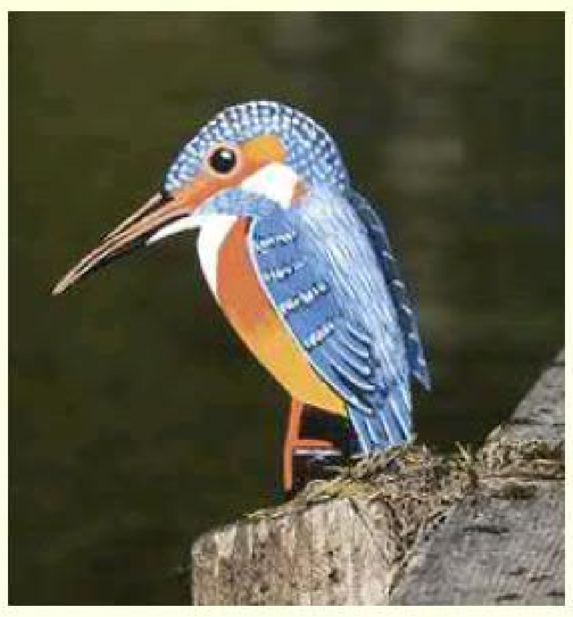

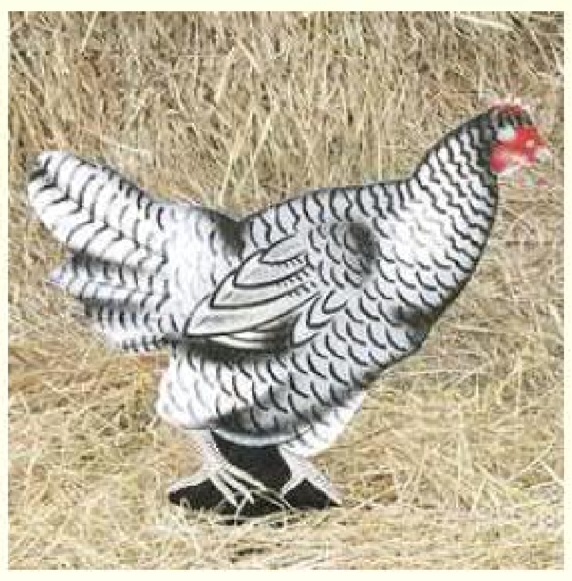

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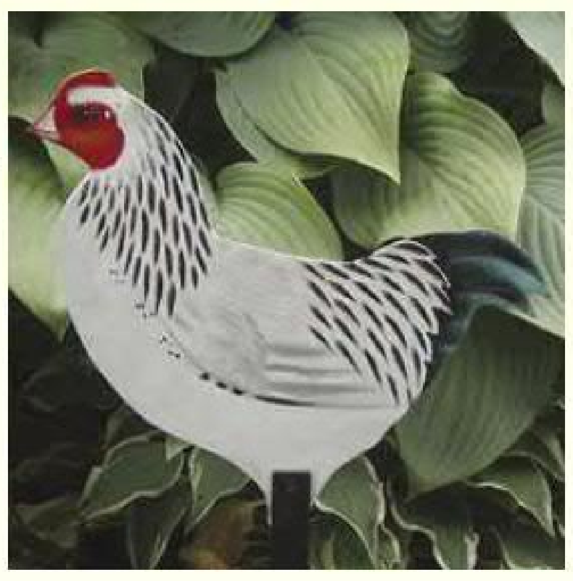

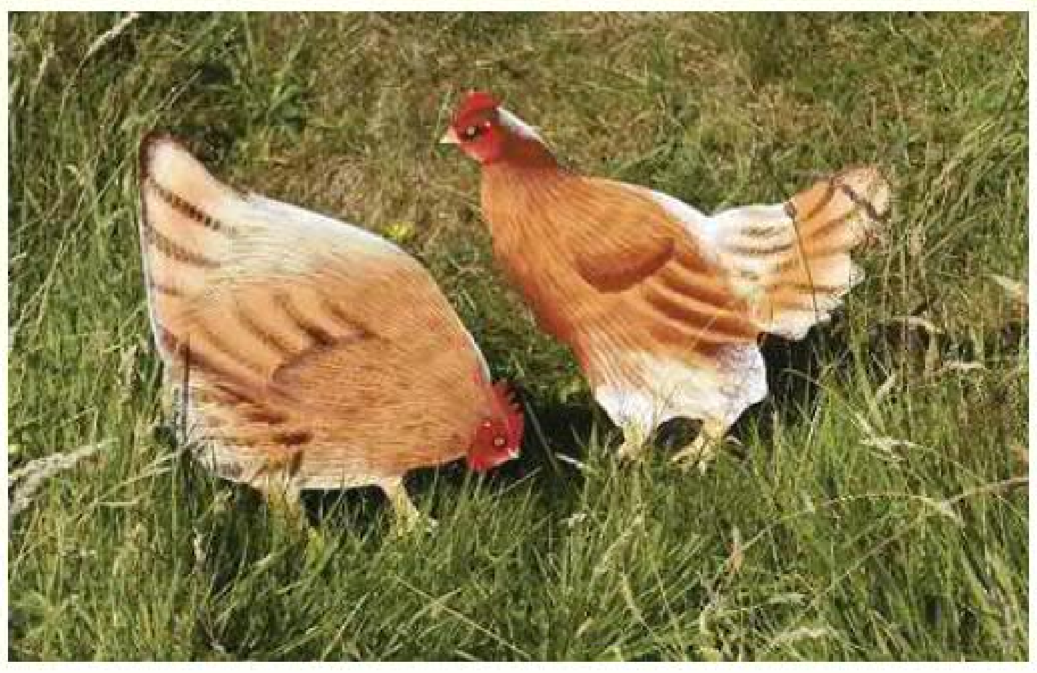

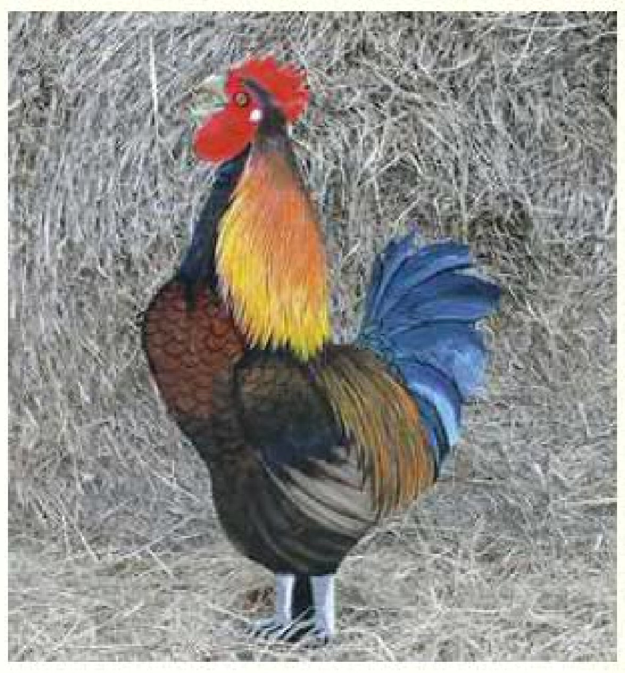

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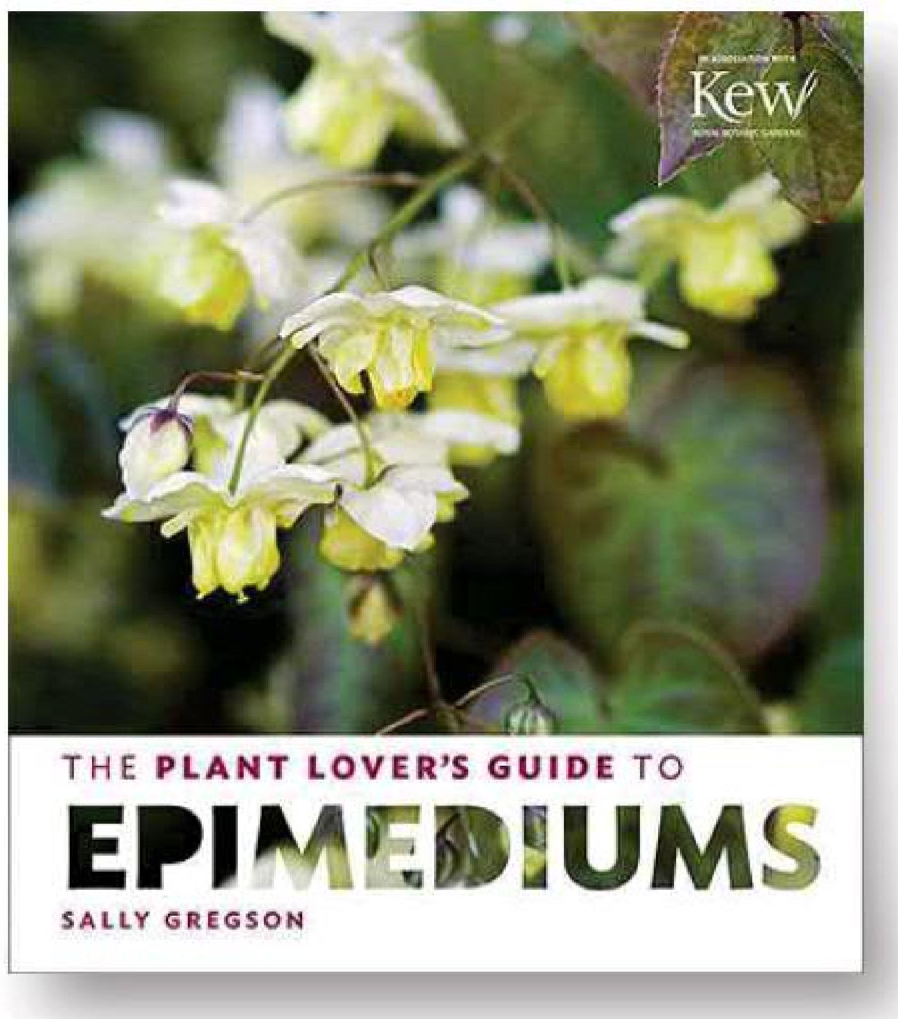
Book reviews



THE PLANT LOVER'S GUIDE TO EPIMEDIUMS
by Sally Gregson

Timber Press, £17.99
ISBN 978-1604694758

Epimediums are poised to take the gardening world by storm and this book is a refreshingly easy introductory reference work.

Reviewer Troy Scott Smith is head gardener at Sissinghurst Castle.

The Plant Lover's Guide to Epimediums is one book within a series; together they provide an impressive reservoir of information that I suspect will become 'must haves' for many years to come.

Author and nurserywoman Sally Gregson (who has spent the past 25 years specialising in epimediums) is believable and, unlike many garden writers, it is evident that she practices what she preaches.

This book gives not only the practical advice needed to care for epimediums, but also a guide to the many different ways in which to grow them. For example, I've never thought of epimediums as suitable pot plants, but I am now encouraged to try at least one in my shady north-facing trough.

The appreciation of epimediums has grown immeasurably over the past few years, due largely to the influx of new discoveries from the mountainous areas of China. This book chronicles this reawakening and brilliantly catches the mood of something new. Gregson's text is clear and brims with enthusiasm; in addition each page is enhanced by accomplished photography.

Separate chapters are devoted to growing and propagating, people and places, and plants and design; but the filling between the bread is a 120-page chapter containing a comprehensive list of varieties. Within which Gregson provides not only facts and figures but also lovely anecdotes – that *Epimedium* x *youngianum* 'Be My Valentine' was named in honour of grower Betty Valentine's 100th birthday.

When I read a book like this I always hope to learn something new and I did. There are minor quibbles, such as the small font size and caption errors, but in summing up this is a book well worth its cover price and I shall look out for others in the series.

Book offer
RRP £17.99. **Reader offer price £16.19** including p&p.

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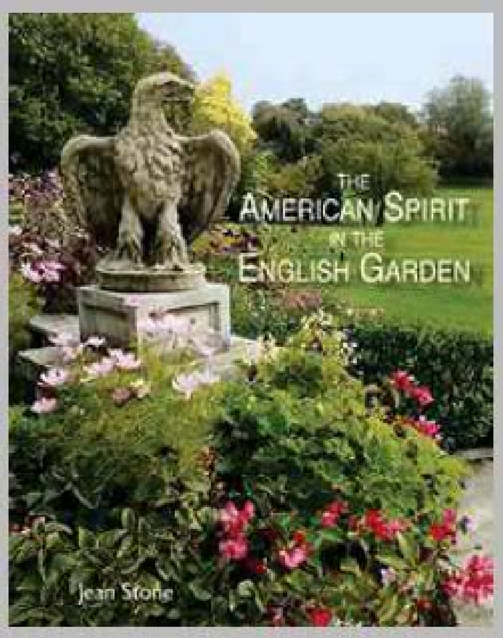
From the ethereal magic of light and colour to the personalities behind some of the most beautiful gardens and plants



THE AMERICAN SPIRIT IN THE ENGLISH GARDEN
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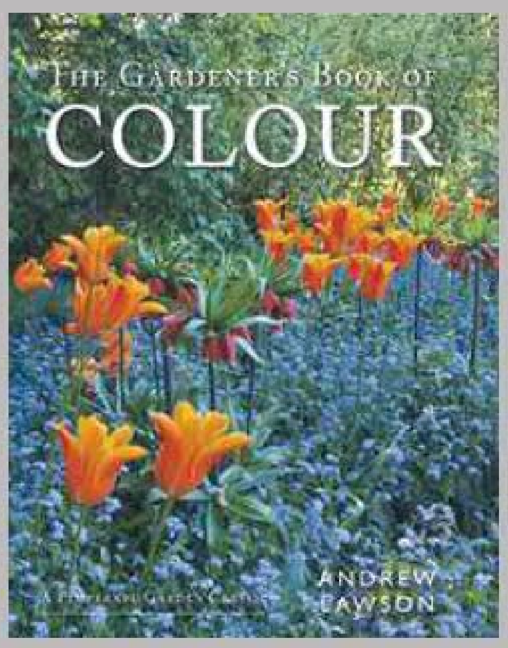
Garden Art Press, £35
ISBN 978-1870673846
How American ideas and personalities have shaped the UK's gardens.



THE GARDENER'S BOOK OF COLOUR
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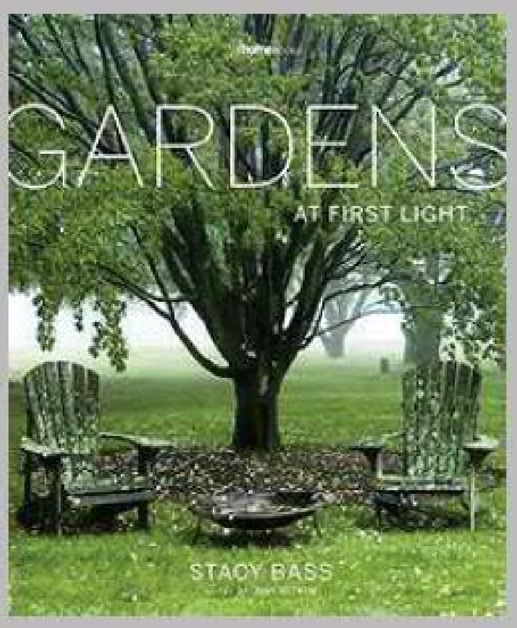
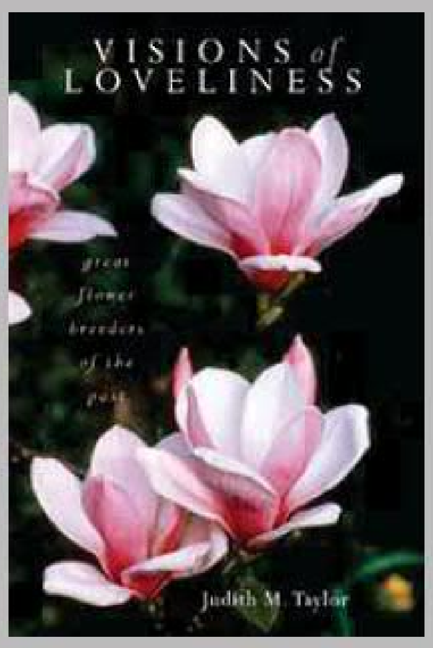
With his artist's eye and scientific training, photographer Andrew Lawson offers an authoritative guide to using colour in the garden.



GARDENS AT FIRST LIGHT
by Stacy Bass
Athome Books, £39.99
ISBN 978-0986268908
Garden photographer Stacy Bass offers a rare glimpse of some stunning private retreats bathed in the pure light of daybreak.



VISIONS OF LOVELINESS: GREAT FLOWER BREEDERS
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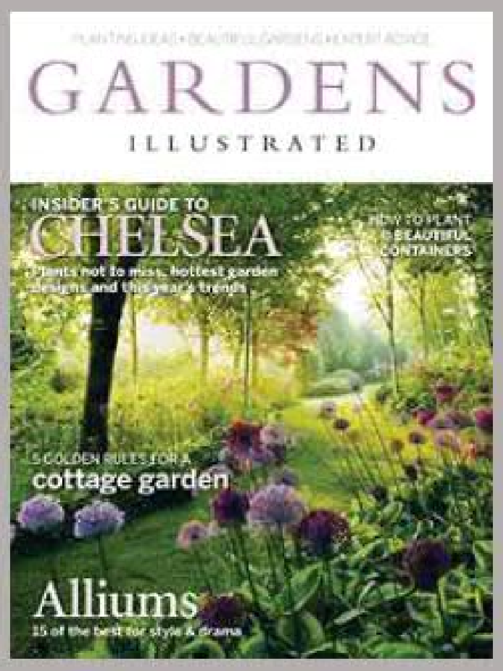

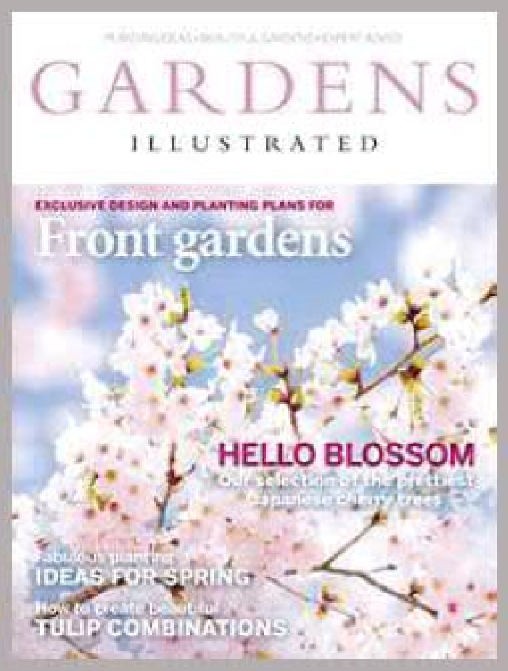

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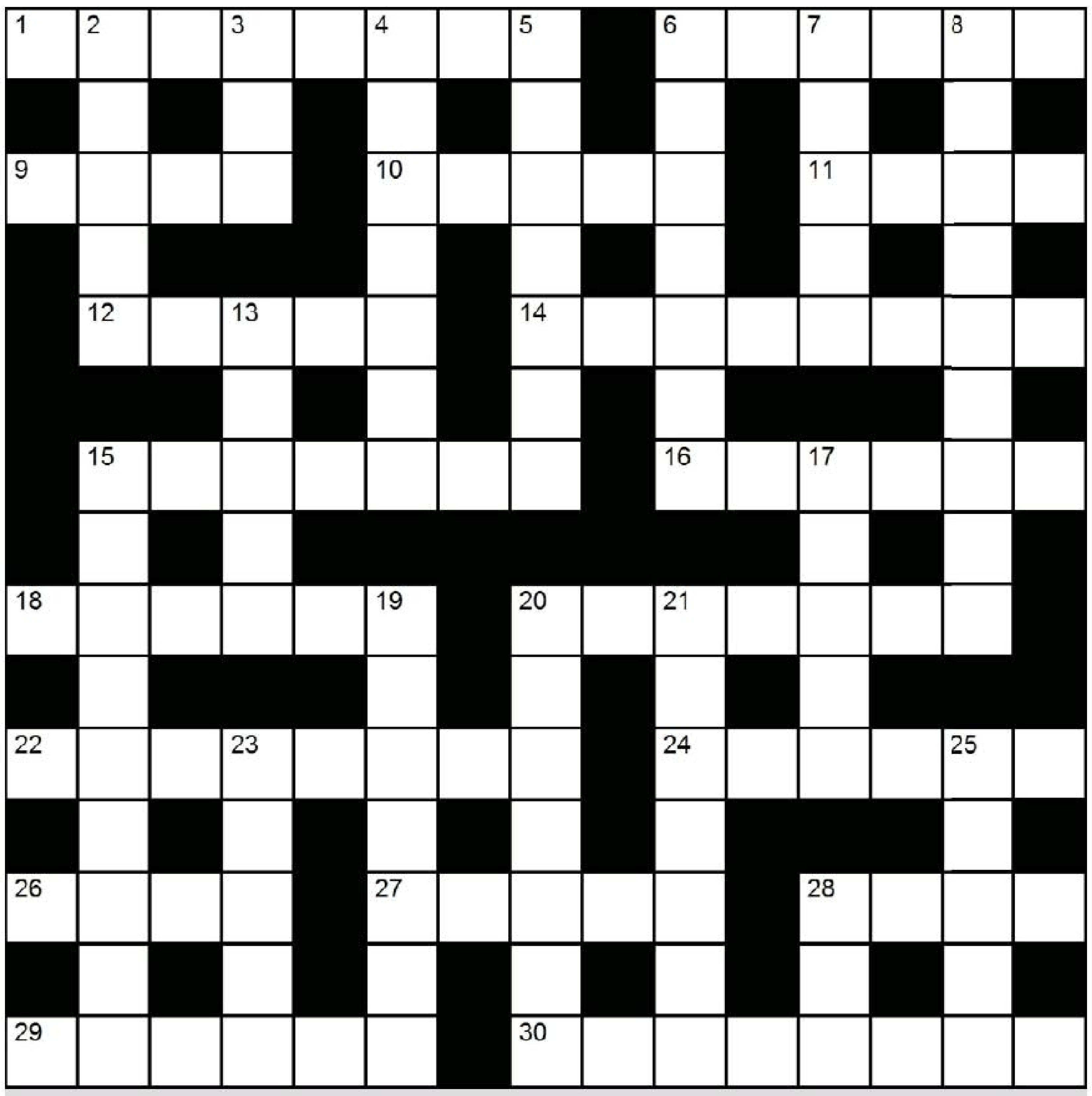


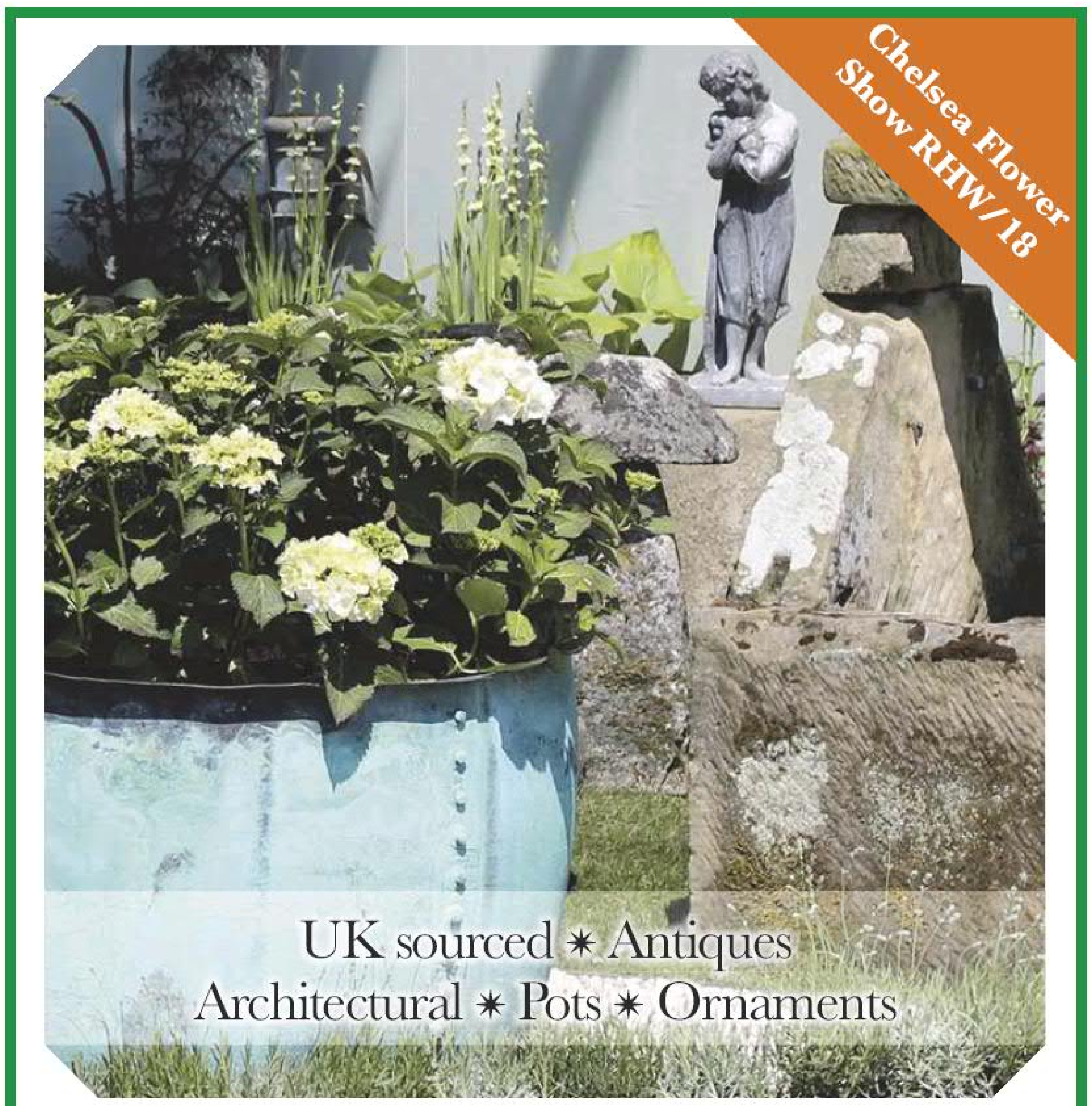
ACROSS
1 Delphinium plant, 'Songbird' with short lateral branch? (8)
6/20 down Commonly called silver birch – bud all eaten up, sadly (6,7)
9 See 22 across
10 Flavour of some Sissinghurst asters (5)
11 An orange-coloured, double tulip 'Killer whale'! (4)
12 *Thunbergia*, or 'Black-eyed ___' (5)
14 Practising getting plants to grow up a wall (8)
15 Hand-shaped, eg like a potentilla leaf (7)
16 Seaside grass in Braemar, Ramsgate (6)
18 *Syringa*, variety of *Scilla* (6)
20 Bouquet's scent (7)
22/9 Common name for hosta – plainly Latin alternative (8,4)
24 Yours truly, Richard, creates a clover-like weed (6)
26 Very dry part of cultivar I deadheaded (4)
27 Genus of evergreen trees (junipers initially located in Utah perhaps) (5)
28 Singular evidence of a trickle irrigation system? (4)
29 Genus of plants in the iris family named after this 18th-century botanist – elementary, my dear! (6)
30 Camomile, commonly – name this anew (8)

DOWN
2 Angles between leaves and stems spoilt salix (5)
3 Essential sort of winged tree fruit (3)
4 Colourful annual with trumpet-shaped flowers (7)
5 Circular cluster of leaves turning to trees (7)
6 Wild bergamot's honey producer and ointment (3,4)
7 The point of a rose? (5)
8 Like narrow, slashed lobe leaves Alice and Tina rearranged (9)
13 Double-flowered, dwarf hydrangea hidden by colossal salvia (5)
15 'Mock privet' in olive family – really hip variation (9)
17 Sandwich-like globe thistle flower heads? (5)
19 Pa's rant about sweet, red dessert apple (7)
20 See 6 across
21 As an invasive plant makes sheep gasp for breath! (7)
23 Where leaves attach to stems, end so awkwardly (5)
25 A pepper that doesn't sound like its taste (5)
28 Fade away – tip of weed, that is (3)

SOLUTIONS TO THIS MONTH'S CROSSWORD WILL BE PRINTED NEXT MONTH

APRIL'S SOLUTIONS
ACROSS 6 Sunflower **8** Alarm **10** Areca **11** Gumbo **12** Dan **13** Spindly **15** Ivy bush **17** Clerodendrum **22** Marrows **24** Blossom **25** Lip **27** Arums **28** Blade **30** Sprig **31** Seedlings.

DOWN 1 Anne **2** Oleander **3** Twiggy **4** Canopy **5** Hard **6** Sparse **7** Rampion **9** Mentha **14** Idler **16** Ulmus **18** Disbuds **19** Root ball **20** Smells **21** Umbels **23** Orange **24** Bushes **26** Port **29** Arne.



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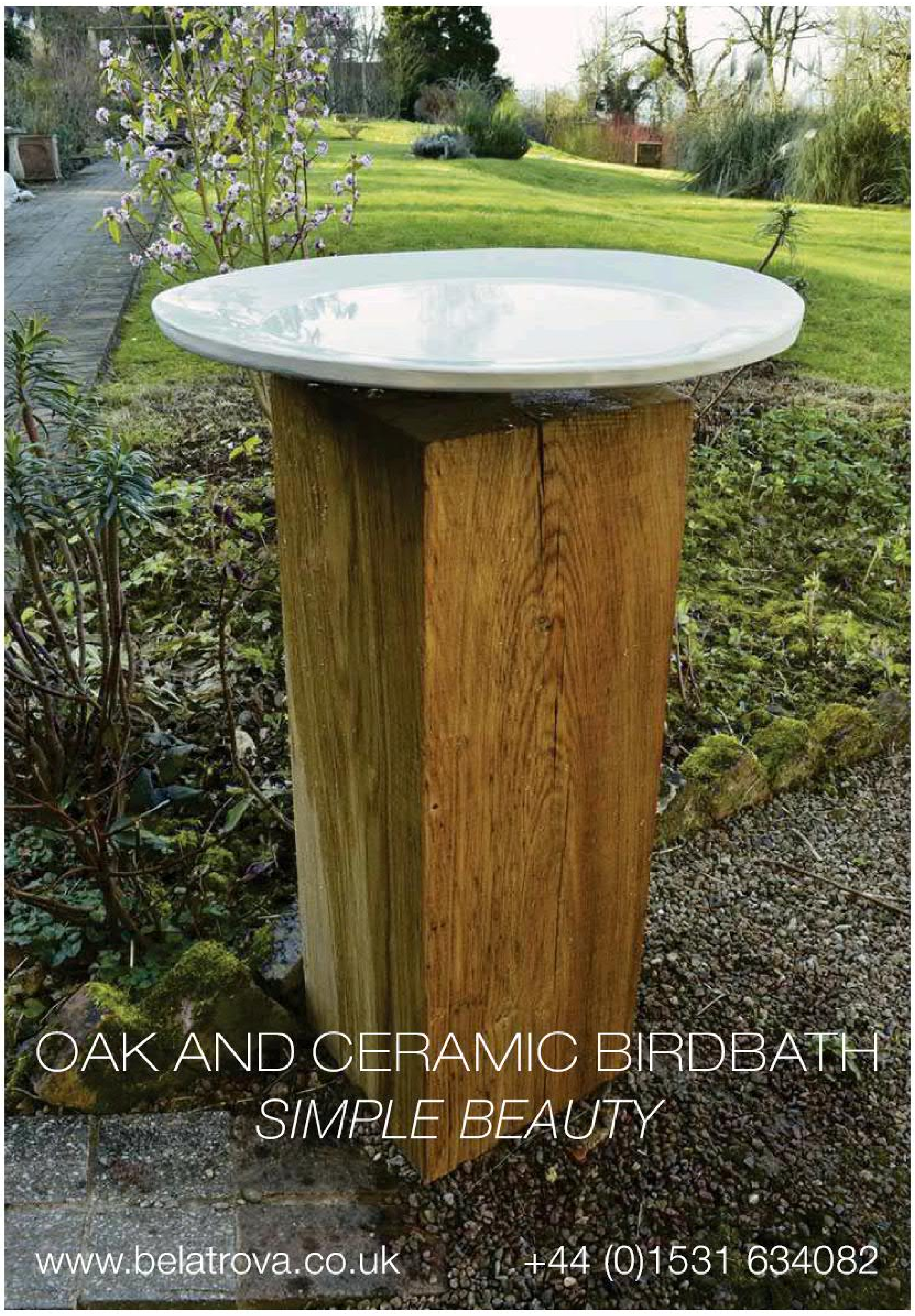

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Juliet

1

2

3

1 Leather kneeler

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6 Tea towel

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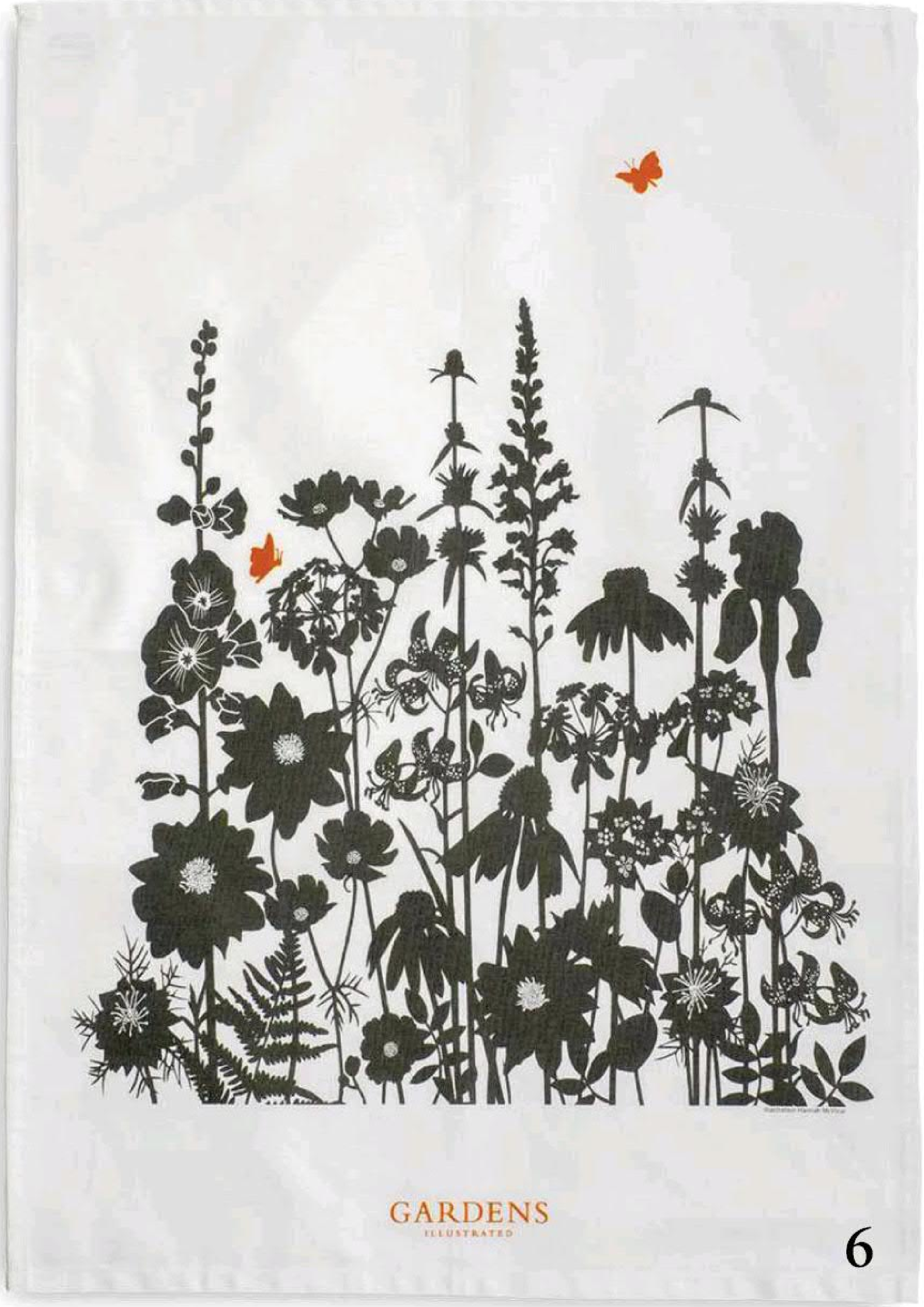

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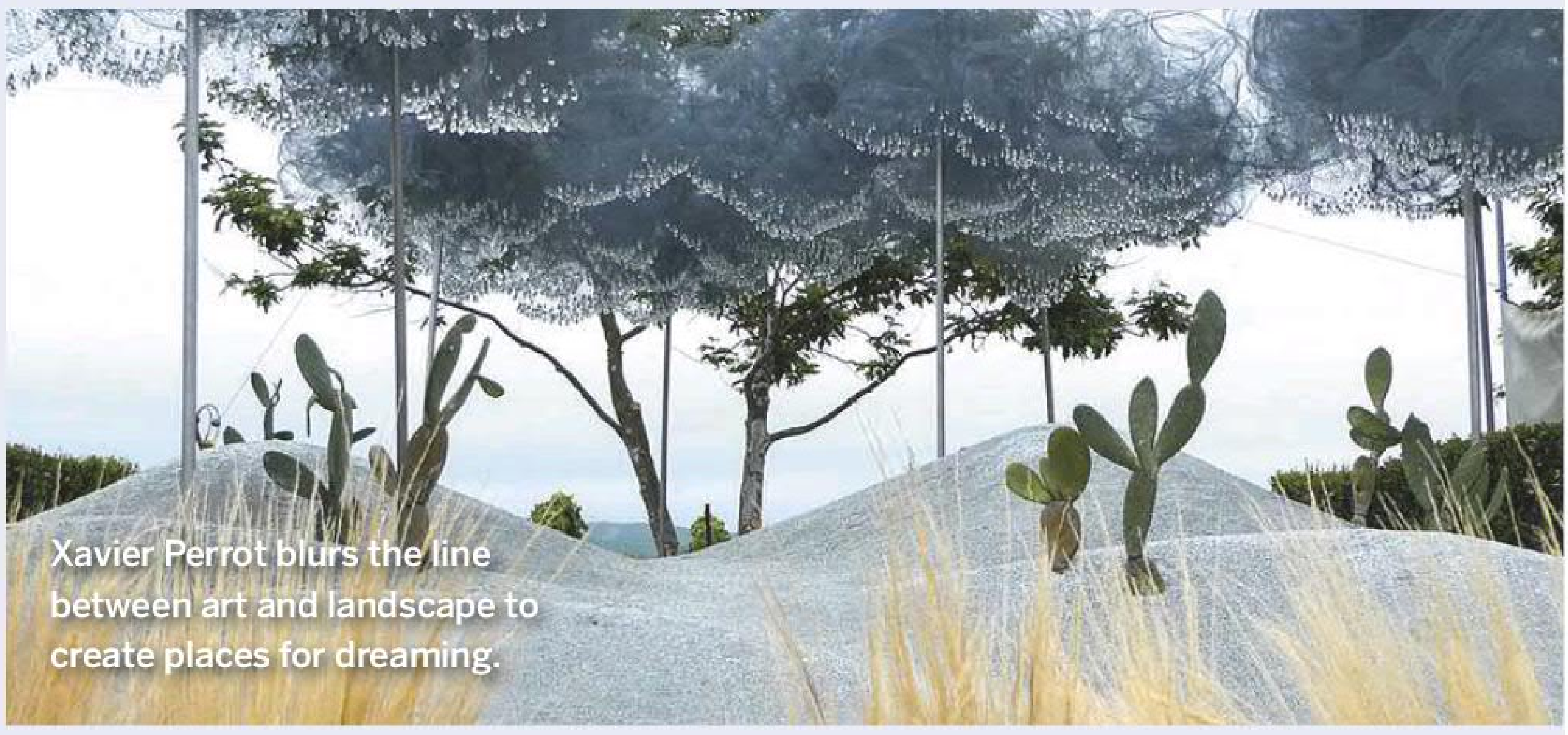
Thomas Doxiadis gardens result from the careful studies of soils, rainfall and historic land use.

James Basson creates sustainable landscapes combining contemporary design with traditional skills.


Xavier Perrot blurs the line between art and landscape to create places for dreaming.

Australian Landscape Conference, 18-22 September 2015

ART AND NATURE:

Conflict and Harmony in the Landscape

With the bulk of humanity now living in cities for the first time in history, designers and planners are challenged with creating liveable and sustainable environments that also allow us a connection with nature while encouraging creativity and activity.

Drawing on an international selection of speakers from horticulture and landscape design, the 2015 Australian Landscape Conference considers the balance between Art and Nature when it comes to designing meaningful spaces for living.

Conference activities

The heart of the conference is the series of speakers' talks taking place on the Saturday and Sunday. In addition, there are optional activities (at an additional cost) aimed at bringing greater insight and inspiration to your conference attendance. You may choose to take the tour to the Dandenong Ranges to visit five unique gardens nestled among lush fern gullies and towering mountain ash. On the Saturday evening you are invited to attend a Speakers' Dinner at the Royal South Yarra Lawn Tennis Club, giving you the chance to meet with the conference speakers. On the following Monday there is a free tour of Warner's, one of Australia's leading plant growing nurseries. Plus there's a series of workshops scheduled for the Monday and Tuesday, which will allow for interactive discussions and a more hands-on learning experience within a smaller group.

All garden lovers are welcome, whether professional or enthusiast.

INFORMATION **landscapeconference.com**
OR EMAIL **sueforge@icloud.com**

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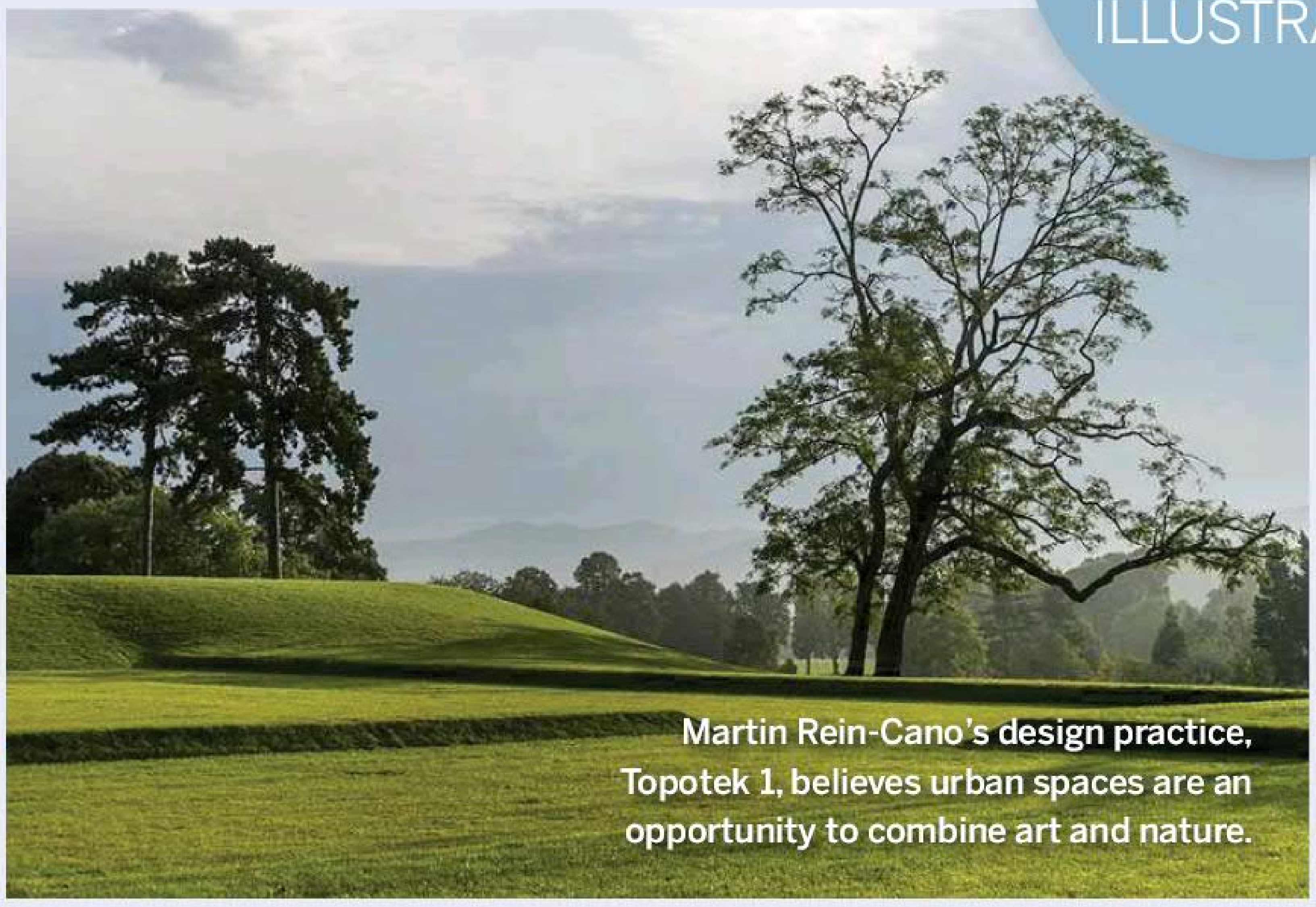
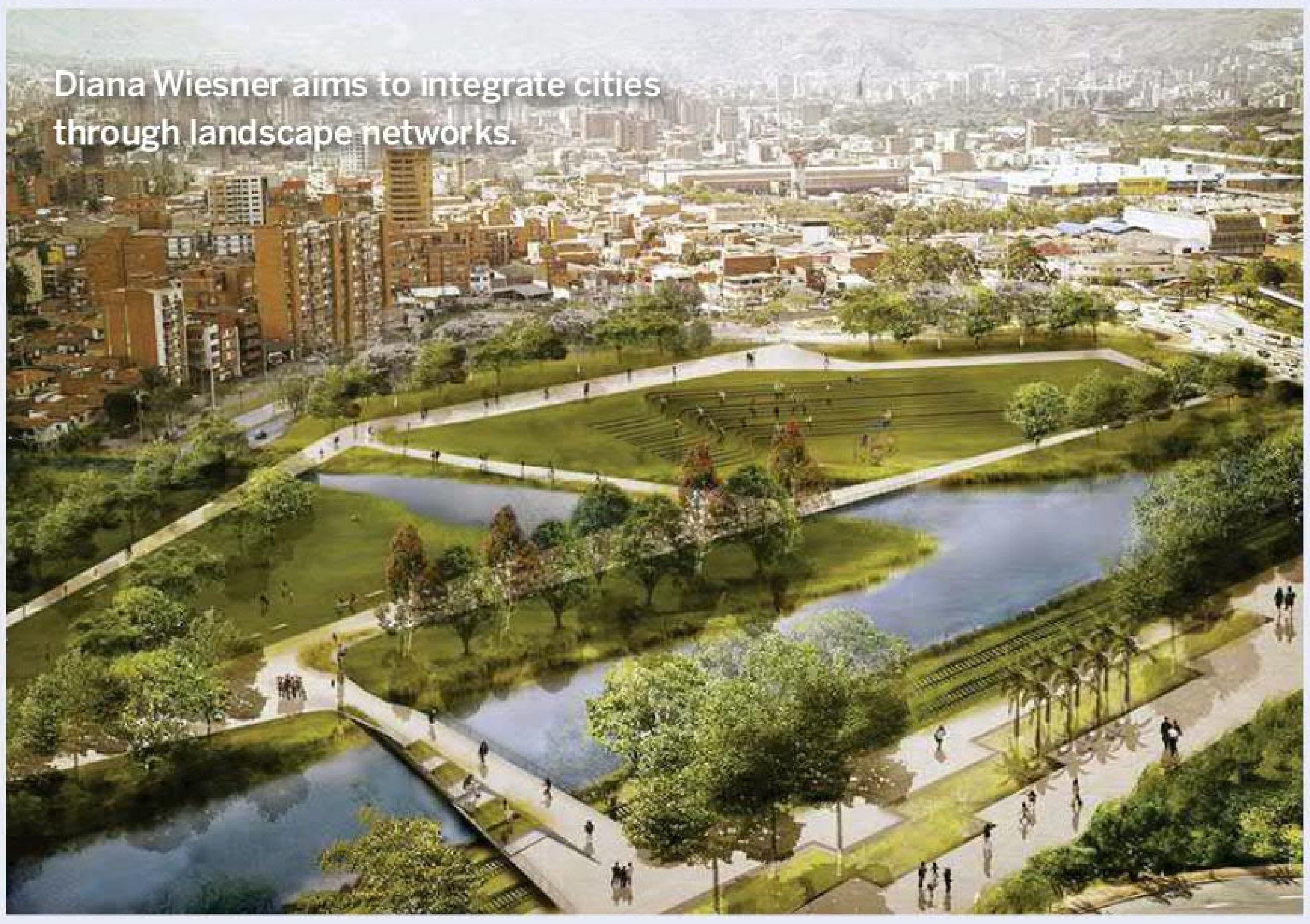
In Australia Philip Johnson reveals his passion for designing with nature.


Martin Rein-Cano's design practice, Topotek 1, believes urban spaces are an opportunity to combine art and nature.


Diana Wiesner aims to integrate cities through landscape networks.

The international selection of speakers include:

Opening the conference is **Tom Entwisle**, Director and Chief Executive of Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne.

James Basson is an Englishman based in the South of France where his close studies of local conditions inform his designs.

Thomas Doxiadis has won many awards, including a prize for the urban space in front of the new Athens Acropolis Museum.

For landscape architect **Martin Rein-Cano** (born in Argentina, now based in Berlin), gardens are the only art form to address all the senses.

Xavier Perrot is half of design studio Cao Perrot, who's portfolio includes park design, intimate gardens, public art installations and events.

Phillip Johnson lives in Australia's Dandenong Ranges. His garden is both innovative and a reflection of his focus on native landscape design.

Landscape architect **Diana Wiesner** is based in Colombia, South America. She seeks to integrate cities through landscape networks.

Viesturs Cielens is illuminated by the dynamic relationship between garden makers and their gardens over time.

Australian Landscape Conference 2015

- **Date** 18-22 September 2015
- **Venue** Melbourne Convention Centre, Australia

To find out more and register visit **landscapeconference.com** or email **sueforge@icloud.com**

Book before 1 July 2015 to take advantage of the 'early bird' registration rate.

Nearby accommodation is available and should be booked well in advance. See website for details.

Respected architect and landscape architect, **Peter Watts** will be Conference Rapporteur, reviewing the key points to each session.

Spring gardens to visit

As spring approaches, make time to visit this collection of stunning gardens and arboretums

1 ABBOTSBURY SUBTROPICAL GARDENS

A recent winner of the HHA/ Christie's Garden of the Year Award, and described by Alan Titchmarsh as "One of the finest gardens I have ever visited." Abbotsbury is celebrating its 250th anniversary during 2015, with new features including a Burma Rope Bridge, lots of special events and more fabulous plants. 2015 is definitely the year to visit Abbotsbury.

ADDRESS **Bullers Way, Abbotsbury (nr Weymouth), Dorset DT3 4LA**
TEL **01305 871387**
WEB **abbotsburygardens.co.uk**

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The stunning gardens, exuberant hanging baskets, exotic planting and themed borders, make a beautiful backdrop to the animals. "The exotic bedding in the old walled garden is amongst the best in Britain." *Stephen Lacey, Daily Telegraph.*

In 2015 the Park is an RHS Partner Garden.

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TEL **020 8232 5050** WEB **nationaltrust.org.uk/osterley**

4 THE GARDEN SHOWS

The Garden Shows at Firle, Nr Lewes, E. Sussex (24-26 April) , Stansted Park, Nr Rowlands Castle, Hants (5-7 June) and Loseley Park, Nr Guildford, Surrey (24-26 July).

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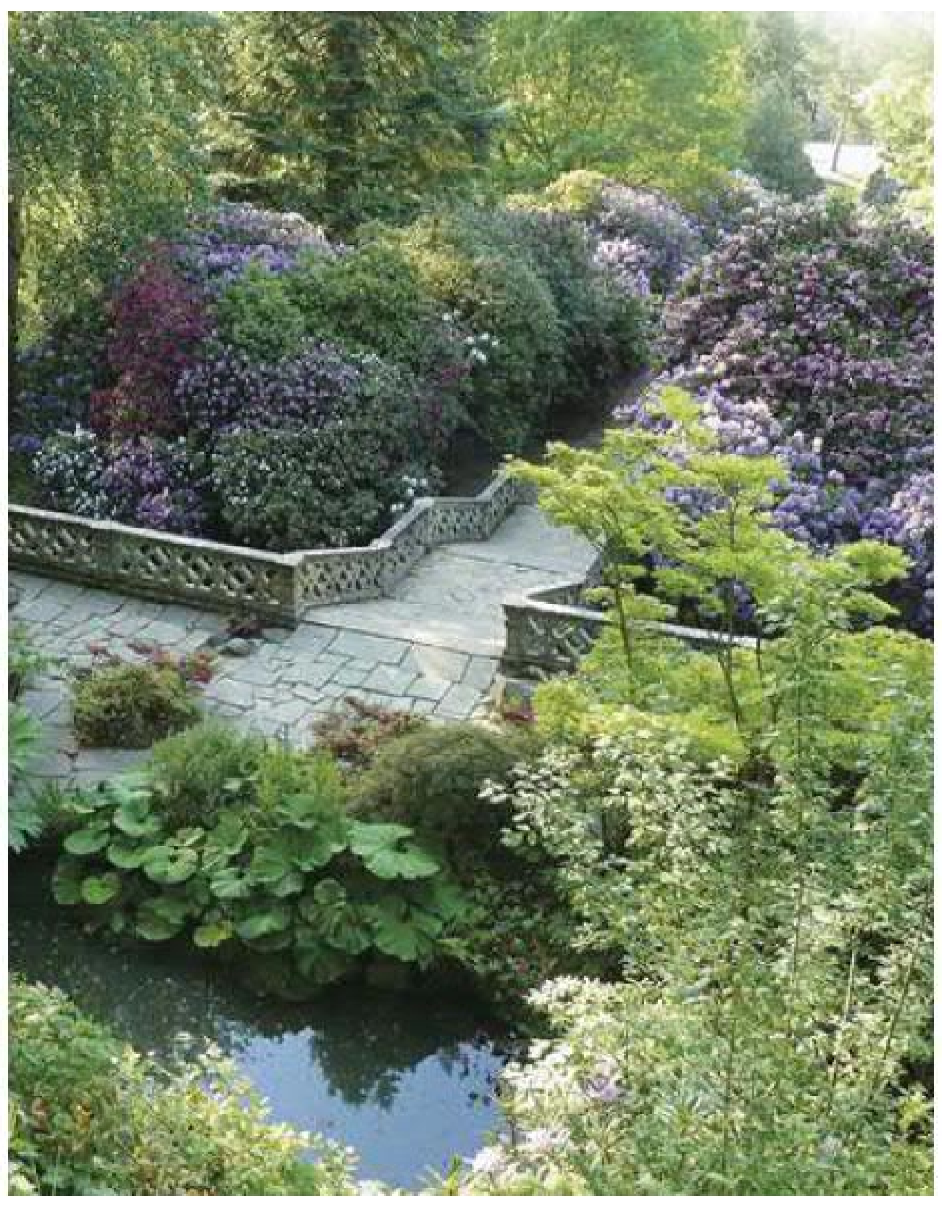

The gardens at Hever Castle offer more than just a visual display – all senses are stimulated as wonderful scents waft in the air and spring breezes rustle the drooping heads of wisteria blooms. Walls are covered in camellias and rhododendrons are in full splendour.

ADDRESS **Hever, Edenbridge, Kent TN8 7NG**
TEL**01732 865224**
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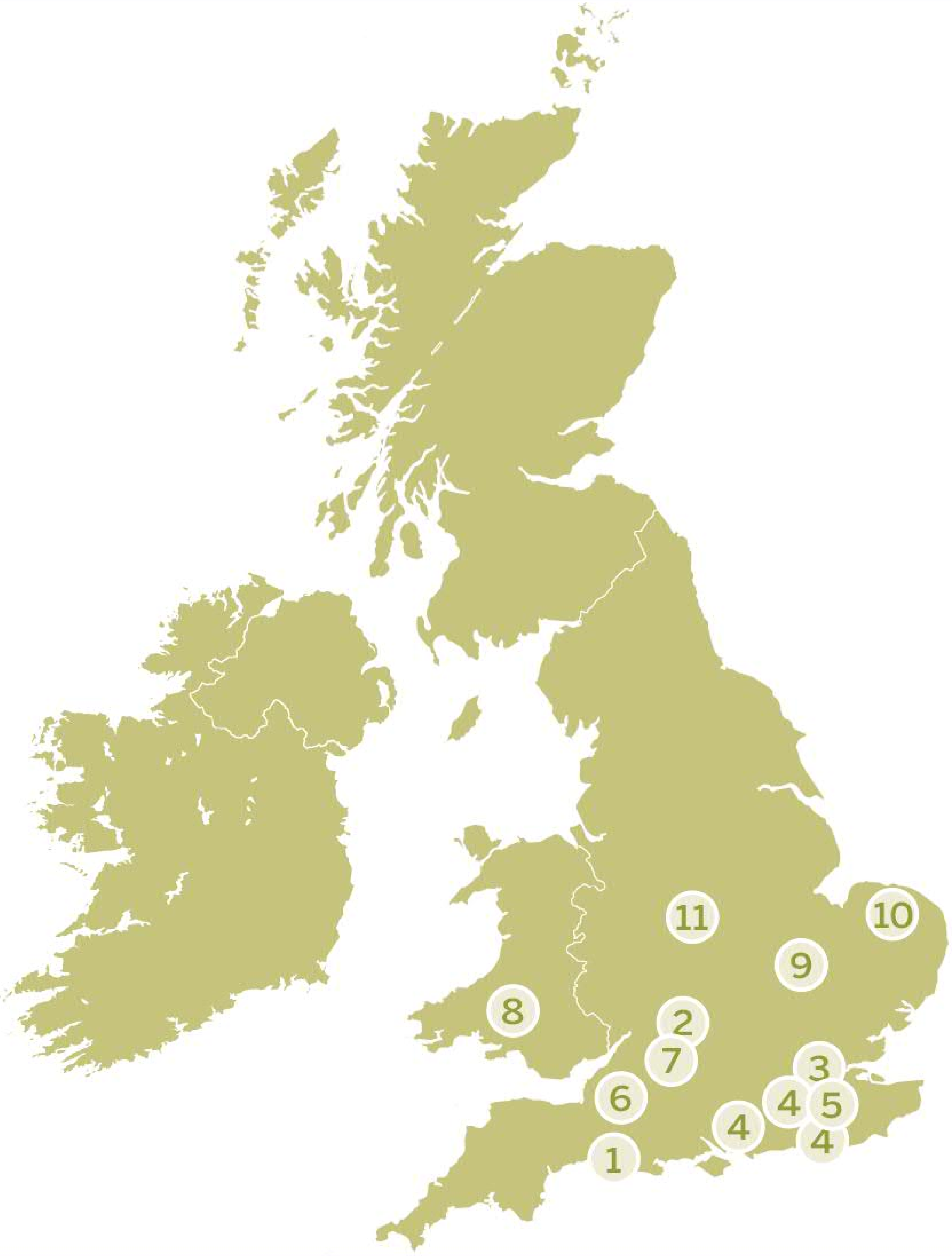
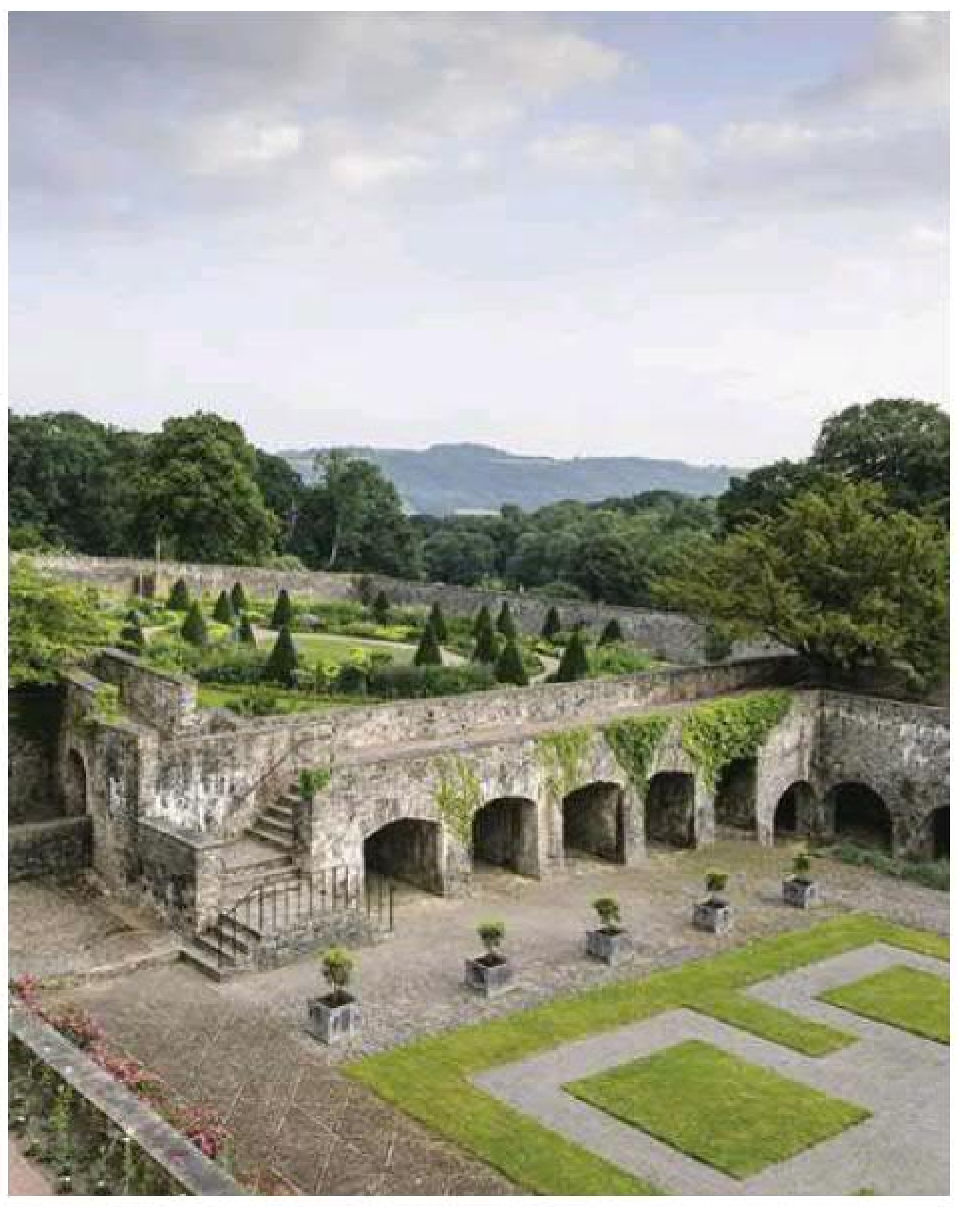


7 BUSCOT PARK

Buscot Park's gardens and pleasure grounds were designed in the late 18th century to complement the Palladian style house. Considerably enhanced in the 20th century by the first, second and third Lords Faringdon, the grounds include the spectacular water garden designed by Harold Peto and the Four Seasons Walled Garden.

ADDRESS **Buscot Park,**
Faringdon, Oxfordshire SN7 8BU
TEL **01367 240932**
WEB **buscotpark.com**

8 ABERGLASNEY GARDENS



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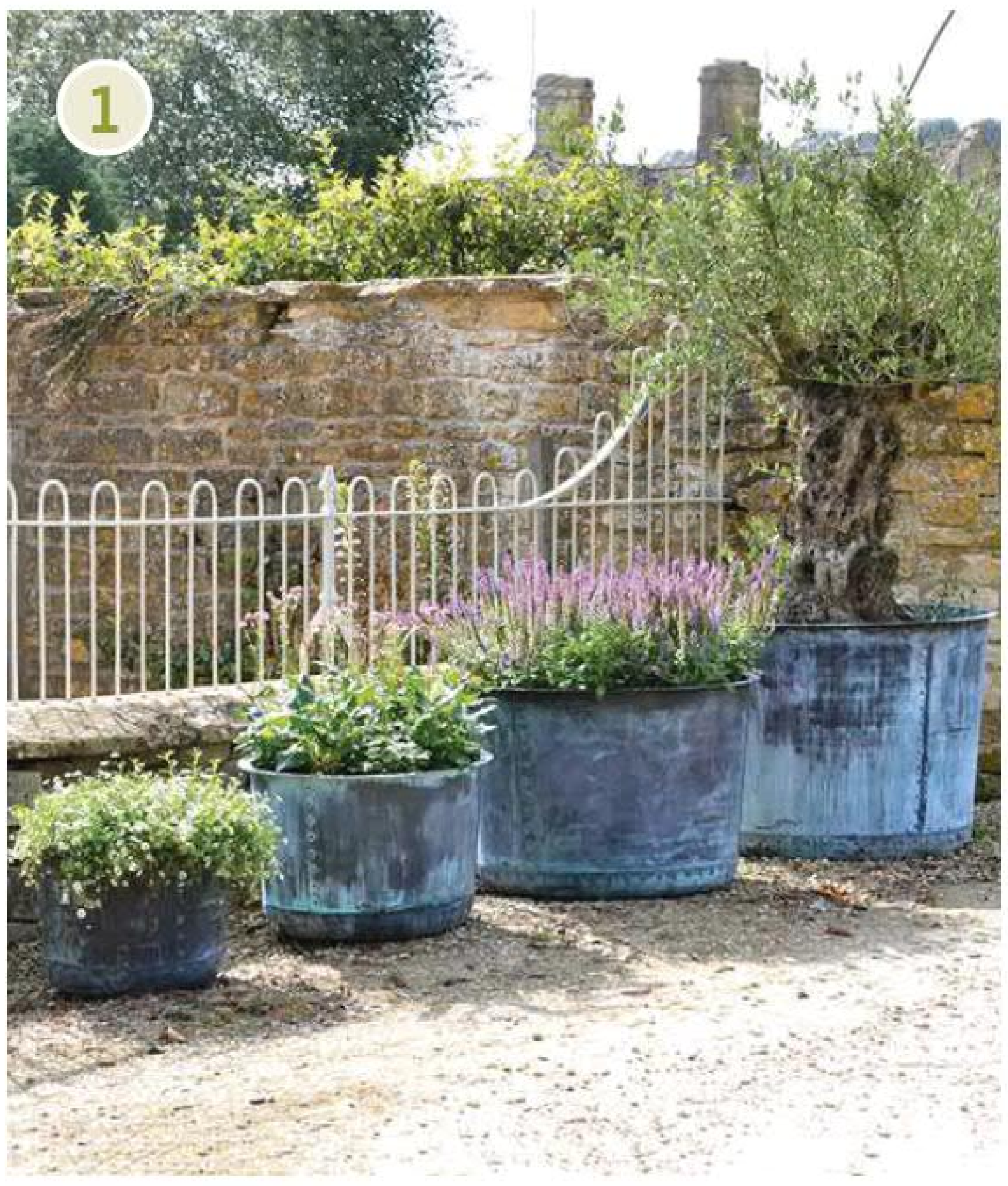

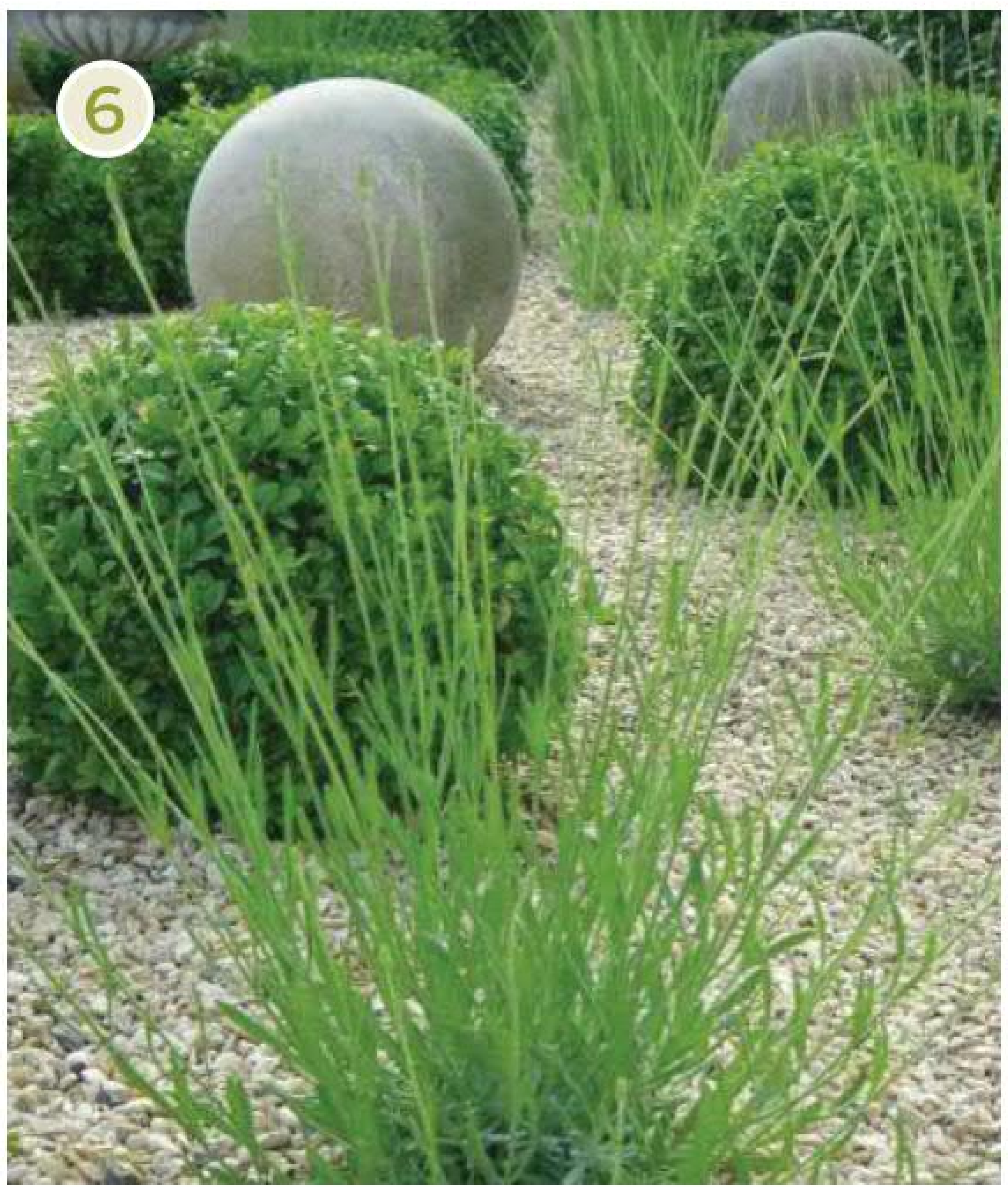

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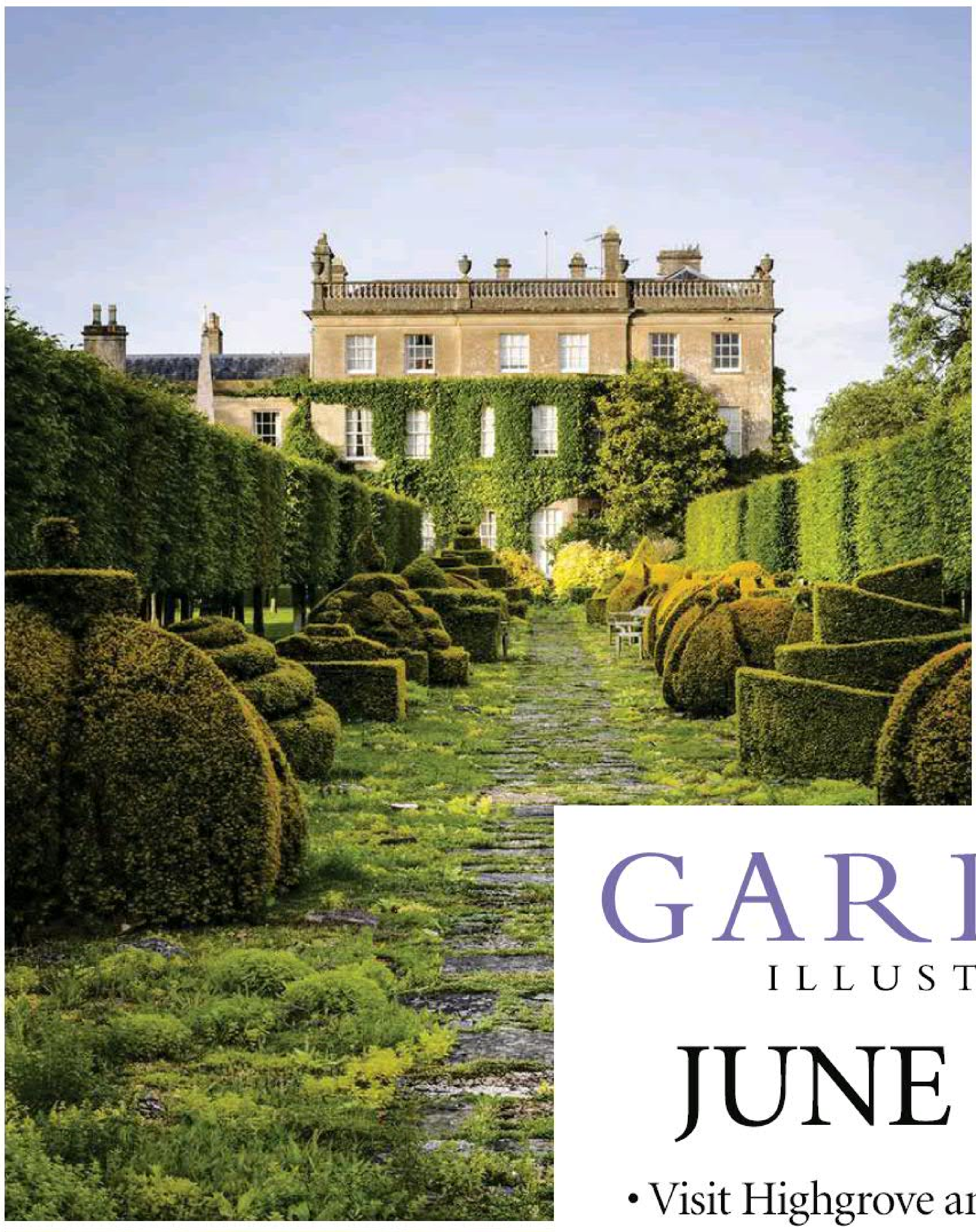

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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: JASON INGRAM; RACHEL WARNE; SABRINA ROTHE; ANDRÉ REUTER

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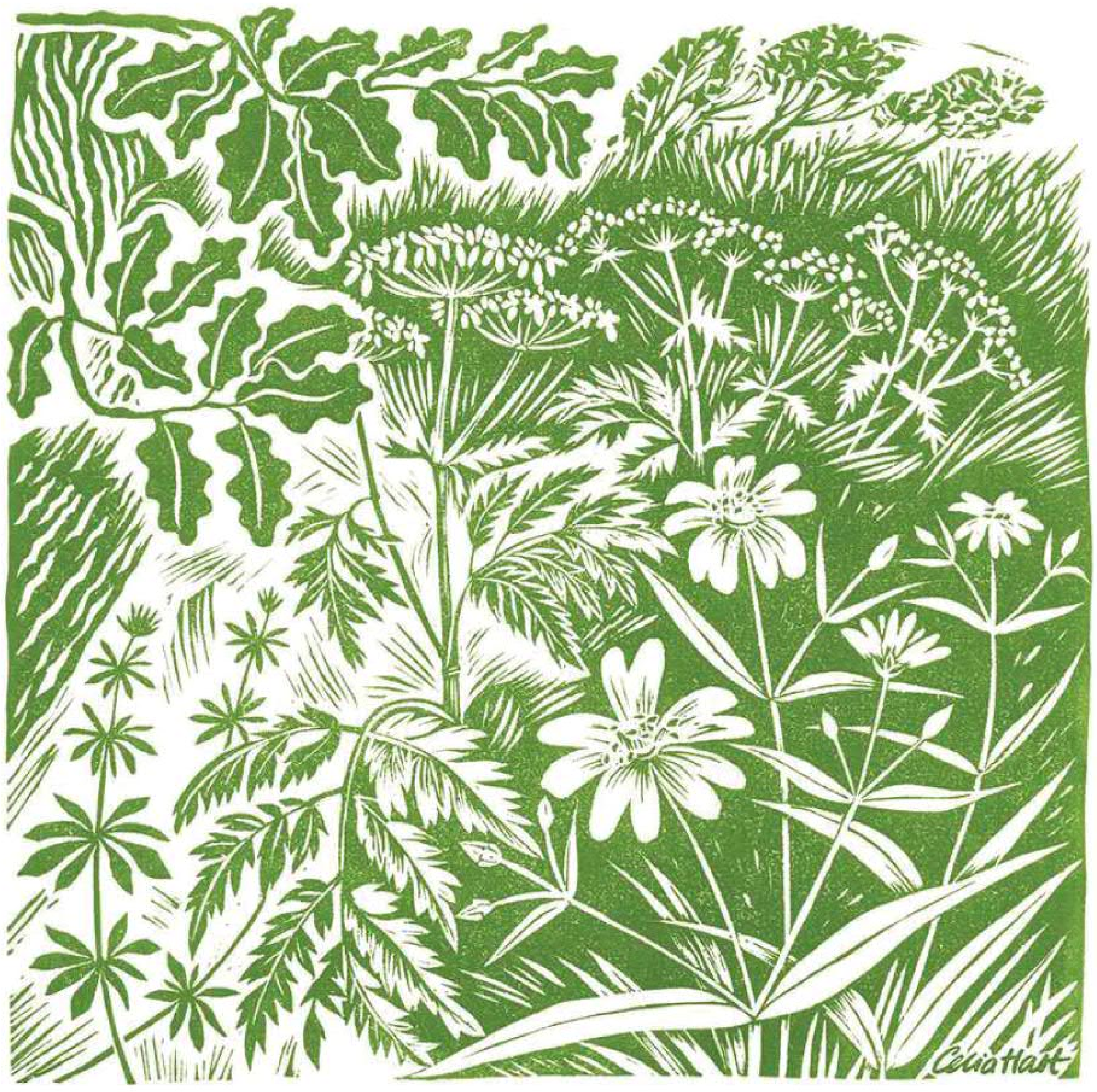
Momentary magic

Frank is granted his wish to be in Worcestershire now that May is here – but only for very briefly

WORDS **FRANK RONAN** ILLUSTRATION **CELIA HART**



May is about every thing being new and fresh; when even the most senile oak is giddy and the humblest ditch flush with perfection

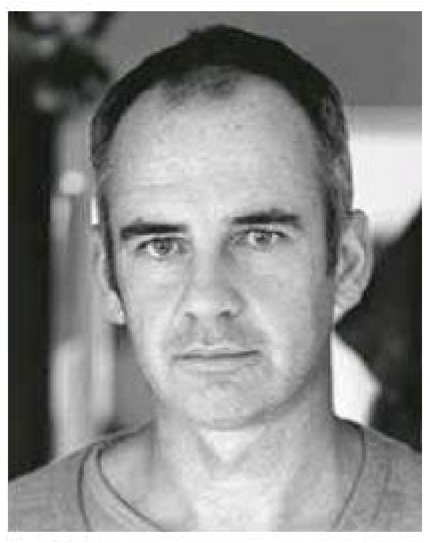
Even after a whole winter of May-like weather in California, I still long to be home for the real thing. May, after all, isn't just about the weather: it is about every thing being new and fresh; when even the most senile oak is giddy and the humblest ditch flush with perfection. The 'little moment' that Shakespeare spoke of is a good month – perhaps he had been too long in London by the time he wrote that sonnet. Or perhaps I have been too long in California already and am romanticising.

I don't think so. Every May for ten years, when I came to look for a subject for this column, all I could think of was to find another way of saying that this is the most beautiful month, and that you might have the best peonies in Christendom but this is the one month when, if the worst came to the worst, you wouldn't need a garden at all. People talk about October and say that autumn is their favourite time, but they are only looking for notice by trying to be different. October is amazing, but it and every other month are nothing beside May.

Now hubris has caught up with me, and this year I am saying that I want nothing more than to be in Worcestershire in May, with my own peonies, which are not even the best in the parish. And so I will be, for less than a week, but a week is infinitely better than nothing. And that will be after two April weeks of madly trying to catch up on having done nothing there since Christmas. In the middle of April the garden will be a guilt-inducing wreck. But then May will come: all-forgiving May when every weed is beautiful and the goose grass is still only trails of optimistic freshness adorning the hedge.

Normally you know the day you have to pull the goose grass out before it is too late, and you can admire this harmless infant state in comfort. And normally you can enjoy the cow parsley because it is where you want it and you think you will have it all cut down before the seed is ripened (not always a thought that tallies with reality). You can enjoy the celmisias flowering, and think how nice a background the artichokes make, knowing that you will be there to divert or truncate any encroaching artichoke leaves that threaten, for no celmisia likes to be touched.

What then of my short May week, to be followed by months more of abandonment? Am I to lay waste to the cow parsley while it is still coming towards its best? A bit of a pointless exercise that, as it would probably only delay flowering and so not prevent seeding at all. Some good can be done among the goose grass with a fine tooth comb perhaps and the celmisias can be given a hurdle or two to deter their enthusiastic neighbours, but multiply that by a hundred other jobs I can think of, and the several hundred I don't have the imagination to because they aren't under my nose, and we are looking at a week of neurosis with me unable to see the flowers for the weeds.



Frank Ronan is a novelist who gardens in both the UK and USA.

What a waste that would be. I'd be better off to find myself that humblest ditch and spend the days staring at stitchwort. For years I've meant to bring stitchwort into the garden along the hedge bottoms. There are few plants more beautiful, wild or tamed, and it demands no husbandry or love and would never suffer for abandonment. It is what May is. A sign to let go, to stop worrying for now. I can leave the thrashing around and catching up and rescuing until later in the summer. The important thing is that, even if the worst comes to the worst and the garden is lost, I can still come home in May and not need a garden at all. □

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